TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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OUT OF TIME

ADVENTURES FOR TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Pelgrane Press

Out of Time

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Not So Quiet

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Notes on Not So Quiet

BY ADAM GAUNTLETT

OH, COME WITH ME, MOTHER AND MRS. EVANS-MAWNINGTON. LET ME SHOW YOU THE EXHIBITS STRAIGHT FROM THE BATTLEFIELD. THIS WILL BE SOMETHING ORIGINAL TO TELL YOUR COMMITTEES, WHILE THEY KNIT THEIR ENDLESS MILES OF KHAKI SCARVES . . .

Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet*

Over 9 million combatants died in the Great War. Individual battles cost hundreds of thousands of lives. The Somme (July 1916) inflicted nearly 420,000 British casualties, 204,000 French, and 420,000 Germans; of that total over 250,000 from both sides were listed as killed or missing. Missing was essentially a euphemism for killed, where the body was not to be found, though there was always a small chance the soldier had been captured by the enemy. More likely he had been blasted into fragments, or was lost somewhere in the mud. It was easy enough to lose a man in this new kind of warfare, when entire battalions could vanish in the space of a few hours.

Death took on new and terrible significance, when it claimed so many, so quickly. 'We looked at all those dead with dislocated limbs, distorted faces, and the hideous colours of decay,' said Ernst Junger, a German veteran, 'As though we walked in a dream through a garden of strange plants, and we could not realize at first what we had all around us.' John Glubb recalled another, surreal incident from Ypres, a hydrostatic shock victim. '[The dead man] had been killed while climbing up the steep bank of the Bluff, and had one foot and one hand stretched out to pull himself up. By some miracle he remained in the same identical position. Except for the green colour of his face and hand, one would never have believed he was dead.' After a time in the trenches, such sights become so commonplace that they cease to cause comment. 'The legs of an Englishman, still encased in puttees, stick out into a trench, the corpse being built into the parapet,' Rudolph Binding recalled. 'A soldier hangs his rifle on them.'

Previous wars would have inflicted far more individual wounds with bladed and piercing weapons: swords, lances, bayonets, low-velocity bullets. In this War, injury by bladed weapon all but disappeared; John Keegan points out that 'though the marks of bayonets were found on a number of bodies, it was presumed that they had been inflicted after the victim was dead; the best statistic available is that edged weapons were a fraction of one percent of all wounds inflicted in the First World War.' Moreover there were few survivable bullet wounds. Though bullets accounted for far more casualties overall – Keegan puts it at about 30% of all new wounds – these were much higher velocity rounds than previously seen in battle. Consequently they were more likely to kill outright, either through damage done or by the hydraulic shock of the bullet's passage. Shrapnel offered the best chance of survival; the splinters and munitions thrown out by shell fire travelled at low velocity, so they were less likely to kill. However the wounds caused sometimes introduced foreign material – fragments of clothing, mud – into the bloodstream, causing infections that could lead to death.

Then there were the new weapons. Poison gas, the Devil's Breath, was as much a psychological weapon as a practical one. 'It was Ahrimanic from the first velvety phut of the shell-burst to those corpse-like breaths that a man inhaled almost unawares,' said Alan Hainbury-Sparrow. 'It lingered about out of control. When he fired it, man released an evil force that became free to bite friend or foe till such time as it died in the earth.' Though it could be survivable, the consequences were severe: blind, crippled men might live out the war, but their lives would never be the same. 'They sat or lay and vomited pieces of their corroded lungs,' remembered Georg Zobel. 'Horrible, this death!'

The flamethrower, though the technology was available, was little used by either side, due to its short range and non-portability. The Germans made more use of it, though the allies did convert their Livens Projector, essentially a flame-throwing mortar, into a poison gas weapon.

The machine gun was far more lethal, particularly given that the typical combatant was laden with kit and walking over barbed wire, through mud; not ideal circumstances for a sudden charge. The result was massacre, hundreds of attackers dead in a matter of minutes. Said Keegan, 'there is something Treblinka-like about almost all accounts of [the first day of the Somme offensive], about those long docile lines of young men, shoddily uniformed, heavily burdened, numbered about their necks, plodding forward across a featureless landscape to their own extermination.'

Air combat was lethal, at least in part, because neither side issued parachutes. The problem was part technological (a truly effective parachute did not exist at the start of the war) and part bureaucratic. 'It is also the opinion of the [Air Board] that the presence of such an apparatus might impair the fighting spirit of pilots' was the British view, and the French and Americans were broadly in agreement. When the Russians ordered 100 British parachute prototypes the Air Board promptly reduced the order to 20, saying 'the Russians should be informed that the Board could not agree to their being supplied for aeroplane purposes, for which they were not considered suitable for the British Air Services.' Meanwhile the Germans developed a parachute for their fighters which they introduced in summer 1918. It saved the life of, among others, Hermann Goering.

The battlefield was lethal in its own right. Men on the attack might get separated from their units, and take cover in a shell-hole. Yet the Flanders mud would claim them. Lieutenant Vaughan remembered listening to the dying at Passchendaele: 'faint, long, sobbing moans of agony and despairing shrieks. It was too horribly obvious to me that dozens of men with serious wounds must have crawled for safety into shell-holes, and now the water was rising above them, and, powerless to move, they were slowly drowning.'

Even if the mud didn't get them, a delay in treatment might. Fighting at the Somme, for example, was so fierce that the wounded could not be brought in immediately. Later they were discovered, having 'crawled into shell holes, wrapped their waterproof sheets around them, taken out their Bibles, and died like that.' (Gerald Brenan)

Mud was the least of it. Dirt, rats, flies, lice, dysentery: these had plagued soldiers for centuries, but never more so than here. The latrine stink, excrement and chloride of lime, was the abiding stench of war in the trenches. Rats bloated themselves on the plentiful corpses, becoming so fat and complacent that they hardly bothered to run away from men. Lice were so prevalent there was scarcely any point getting rid of them; so long as a soldier was at the Front, there was no way to keep clean. That didn't stop people trying. They'd conduct louse-hunts in their off-hours, trying to destroy insect and eggs both. Every single creature comfort was something to be treasured, because they were so infrequently had. 'The vain search for a water-closet,' said Ernst Junger, 'is the outstanding memory one has of the villages of Lorraine.'

A man could die anywhere, at any time. On previous battlefields, the place of danger was at the front. In the War, a man might survive everything the trenches could throw at him, and yet be killed while in a rear sector, by stray shell, aircraft bombardment, or gas attack. 'There is no such thing as complete security,' said Lord Moran.

Much of the time the victim never saw his killer. 'Where was the enemy?' asked Walter Bloem, of coming under British fire at Mons. 'Not the faintest sign of him anywhere . . . And still the bullets kept coming over, over our heads and all about us.' Besides, the individual soldier's viewpoint was at best restricted and at worst positively obscured, either by adrenaline, fear, the smoke and flame of the battlefield, or the inaccuracies of memory under stress. NCO Bloch recalled little of his battles in the summer of 1914. They were reduced to 'a discontinuous series of images, vivid in themselves but badly arranged like a reel of movie film that showed here and there large gaps and the unintended reversal of several scenes.'

Surrender, while always an option, was fraught with peril. Though there were stories about treachery and ambush under the guise of a white flag, most attempts were probably genuine. That said, there was absolutely no guarantee that the surrender would be accepted, either because the conditions were unfavourable or the victor was not in the mood. One such incident happened on the Somme. '[The Germans] were holding up photographs of their families and offering watches or other valuables in an attempt to gain mercy but as the Germans came up the steps, a soldier, not of our battalion, shot each one in the stomach with a burst from his Lewis gun.' Incidents like these happened all too often, on both sides. Of course, runaways were as likely to be shot by their own side as by the enemy. Battle police constantly patrolled the trenches looking for stragglers, and everyone knew the penalty for cowardice was execution.

Wounds could be desirable. Some men self-inflicted injuries in order to avoid combat, but even perfectly willing soldiers were happy to turn back the moment they were injured, however slightly. The most desirable injury was what the British called a Blighty Wound, a term for a non-lethal injury severe enough to warrant being sent back home for treatment, possibly even bad enough to invalid the sufferer out of the army altogether. However even a minor, non-incapacitating wound was enough to get a man sent back to the aid station, which during an offensive could mean the difference between life and death.

There was greater attention paid to medical care. Each soldier carried a sterile field dressing in his kit. Anaesthetics, antiseptics, even blood transfusion was available back at the field hospital. Moreover the transport system was remarkably efficient, given the circumstances. In the British army, first stop was the Regimental Aid Post, where minor wounds were treated;

everyone else went, via the Dressing Station, bandaged and sedated, to Casualty Clearing, where much of the life-saving surgery was performed. Triage separated the Casualty Clearing patients into those to be sent on, those to be immediately operated on, and those who were dying. The Dressing Station was intended for intermediary care, but teams of travelling surgeons did attend Dressing Stations, performing emergency operations. From Casualty Clearing the next stop was a Base Hospital, where the injured were sent to recover. A patient would be carried by stretcher to Regimental Aid, or walked there, but thereafter they could expect to travel by motorized transport. None of this was without risk; the most decorated British soldier of the War was Private W.H. Colman, VC, DCM and Bar, MM – stretcher bearer.

Wait, wait, I have so much, so much to show you before you return to your committees and your recruiting meetings . . . What? You cannot stick it any longer? You are going? I didn't think you'd stay. But I've got to stay, haven't I?

References

The texts most frequently referred to are:

Firing Line; Holmes, Richard; Pimlico 1994

The Face of Battle; Keegan, John; Viking Press, 1976

The Royal Flying Corps in World War I; Barker, Ralph; Robinson 2002.

Not So Quiet; Smith, Helen Zenna, Feminist Press, 1988

Most of the quotes from men who served on the Front are taken from Holmes' Firing Line, with the exception of Gerald Brenan's recollection and the unnamed soldier's account of the killing of surrendering Germans, which comes from Keegan. Information and quotes concerning parachutes comes from Barker.

Not So Quiet

A Purist/Pulp Trail of Cthulhu scenario set at a military hospital during the Great War.

Synopsis

The characters are either serving soldiers or on the front line during the War, for whatever reason. They are sent to Military Hospital Number Five, either because they are wounded, or because they have been posted there.

It is spring 1917 and yet another Push is on; broken men are being sent back for medical care every hour of every day. The hospital, being so close to the Front, is not immune to danger. It has been shelled twice in the last two weeks, and gassed once. The staff are shattered, driven to the limits of human endurance by overwork and fatigue. Casualties are high, and the burial parties are constantly busy.

Worse is to come. A group of dedicated people working to further the ends of the Charnel God are attempting to contact that grim entity. Unless stopped, they will start a chain of events that will end with the camp being utterly destroyed, killing everyone in the hospital.

Some characters will be serving in the military, since the scenario takes place at a British military hospital. However any character of any nationality could end up dragged, bleeding and possibly unconscious, to Military Hospital Number Five. Civilians might also end up there, particularly if they have been wounded or if they are working for the military. The characters do not know each other prior to this scenario.

For the purposes of this scenario the skill **Cop Talk** is replaced by the skill **Military Talk**, which has exactly the same intent and works the same way, except that now it is used on military men rather than the police. Players shouldn't assume that they all must have **Military Talk**; many soldiers on the Front were only very recently civilians, and may know little about the army and its rituals. The Keeper should feel free to rule that **Military Talk** has a different function when applied to different armies; French, American or colonial troops may not get quite the same response from a British officer than they would from officers of their own nationality, while German troops caught behind enemy lines can expect a reduced result from using **Military Talk** in a British encampment. Reduced does not mean negligible; serving officers, particularly career military, have a kind of brotherhood that often transcends national barriers, though a linguistic barrier may be more difficult to deal with.

Credit Rating functions normally, except that the medium of exchange (if such is needed) is cigarettes, pots of jam, records, and food packages from the Red Cross, all of which are prized items in the barter economy of the Front. Characters with higher **Credit Rating** can be assumed to have better access to these forms of ersatz currency. This may allow them to buy special favours from those in authority, or just make their own lives a little bit more comfortable. Encourage the player to specify what each point of **Credit Rating** represents, as this may prove useful later. A collection of French pornographic photographs would make excellent bribes in many circumstances, for example, but might not work so well if offered to a nurse. This change in the way **Credit Rating** works has no bearing on class; social differences are just as they were before everyone put on a uniform.

Purist or Pulp?

As written, the bleak setting and plot favour a Purist game. This is reflected in the damage dealt to the characters at the beginning and in the heavy Stability losses in the final encounters. The protagonists should always feel as though they are on the edge of losing everything.

That said, there's nothing to prevent the game being played Pulp. The wartime setting could favour two-fisted action just as easily as mind-numbing horror; after all, this is the same Great War that spawned Bulldog Drummond, the Saint, and Biggles, and was formative in the development of Lord Peter Wimsey and Hercule Poirot.

Keepers who would prefer a Pulp game should therefore downgrade the damage dealt in the first scenes and the stability checks in the final scene, to give the protagonists a slightly less fraught adventure. **Damage** dealt in the initial **Injured** scene should be a die only, not a die +3; this means that a successful **Athletics/Fleeing** check in that scene reduces the damage to a die -3. The **Stability** checks in the final dream sequences should be reduced to difficulty 3, with Zenna's being difficulty 5.

The Awful Truth

A nurse, Zenna Borden, has been driven mad both by the horrors she has been exposed to and by her own consciousness of sin. When she last served at Military Hospital Number Five she had an affair with an infantry officer (since killed) and became pregnant. She managed to wangle a leave and went to England to have an illegal back-alley abortion. Since then she has become convinced that what she did was not only wrong but unforgivable, and is determined somehow to make amends. She wants her baby back and will do anything, sacrifice anyone, to make that happen.

She believes that the spirit of her child is talking to her, telling her how to break the bonds of death and get her baby back again. Thanks to her devotions and sacrifices (she has sent over fifty souls to the Charnel God, and has become adept at covert murder) she has gained magical power, and thanks to her 'healing hands' she now has a small group of followers, the terminal cases whose pain is eased by her ability and who hope that she, somehow, can make them whole again. Her goal is to conduct a ritual that will contact Mordiggan directly, and then bargain with that entity for the life of her baby and for the lives of her followers.

Mordiggan will be unwilling to bargain, and his reaction to this suggestion will be enough to destroy the camp and kill everyone in it.

If the characters are to succeed, they must stop Borden from carrying out this ritual.

The Spine

The action opens with the characters in an ambulance convoy on their way to Military Hospital Number Five. Their first challenge is to avoid being blasted to fragments as their convoy is shelled; this conflict introduces the characters to each other and to the War. Soon afterward they arrive at the Military Hospital, where they discover (either on their own or because they are told so by the priest, Pombal), that all is not well. Patients are dying by the dozen and Pombal suspects a spiritual corruption. Death is all around them, and death's servants, the ravens, seem unnaturally interested in events at the Hospital. The cult, meanwhile, continues to carry out its daily routine of exchanging their pain, passing the agony that they should be suffering on to other patients. It is this that is increasing the death rate; the extra agony, passed on either through medication or food, is causing the other patients to die before their time. The cult may attempt to subvert the characters, or the characters may try to expose the cult. The priest, Pombal, goes missing, and his corpse is discovered, showing the characters that the cult, for all its protestations, is willing to do what it takes, murder anyone, to get what it wants. In the final scene the cult tries to expunge all of its pain, appealing to Mordiggan while offering no sacrifice in return. It is this that will destroy the cult, and possibly also the Military Hospital and everyone in it. The characters will have to defeat the cult, breaking down the members' last pillars of sanity, if they are to have a hope of saving the Hospital.

The Forbidden Zone

This is a story about loss and the destruction of hope. The antagonists are all people who would never have come into contact with the Mythos had it not been for the War, and who will now commit any atrocity to get back the lives that they used to have. The protagonists are, in a sense, no different from the antagonists; the Mythos would never have touched their lives, had not the War intervened, and now they too have to do what they can to stave off an awful fate.

This is reflected in the land about them. It was once fertile Belgian farmland, with houses and towns much like their own, that have now been almost completely destroyed, the men and women who lived there having been killed or turned out of their homes. There is no reason, in early spring 1917, for those on the front lines to think that the War will ever end; if anything, the March Revolution in Russia is a grim suggestion that the whole world may be about to tear itself apart in a frenzy. Nor are the Russians the only ones on the edge. There are strikers in Britain and the U-Boat menace is wreaking havoc on shipping, the Germans are starving, the French have been bled dry and their army is on the verge of mutiny, the Americans are still too proud to fight (according to Woodrow Wilson, though that will soon change), and the Western Front is one long open wound across the heart of Europe. Not one decisive battle has been fought on the Front, but there have been plenty of bloodbaths. The Somme, both battles of Ypre and Verdun have demonstrated the cost of aggressive action. A British attempt to open things up on another front ended with half a million dead at Gallipoli.

There is every reason to despair. The antagonists in this story have done exactly that, and if asked, would no doubt argue that theirs is the only logical, sensible course of action. If everything they ever believed in is about to be or has already been destroyed, what price sanity?

Scenes

The Last Thing You Remember (Injured)

Scene Type: Introduction

This is for characters brought into the scenario as injured men. Scenes intended for them will be indicated in the text by the descriptor **Injured**. There is no benefit or detriment to being introduced in this way; it opens up some extra scenes, but the scenario does not depend on them being introduced one way or the other.

Though scenes with the **Injured** tag are intended for these characters, the characters are not limited to these scenes. Their investigations may take them elsewhere; the **Injured** tag merely refers to extra character-specific scenes that the player may uncover.

These characters must make a **Health** check at difficulty 5. Those who succeed awake in the back of an ambulance, probably jolted awake as the truck runs over rough ground. Those who fail may be awake but delirious, unable to fully comprehend what's going on, and will only snap out of it in the next scene. **First Aid** is not an applicable ability at this point; the characters will already have been attended to, before they were put on the ambulance. However non-delirious characters may attempt **First Aid** on delirious friends, in the hope of snapping them out of it. If this is done then no damage is restored, but the character does recover his wits.

Characters should make either an **Athletics** or a **Fleeing** check, difficulty 4, to determine the scale of their injuries. Success means a die of damage only; failure means a die +3. However the consequences of **Fleeing**

on a battlefield can be severe, and characters who attempt it should be warned before they make the check that if their actions are spotted then they could risk a court martial, possibly ending in execution for cowardice in the face of the enemy. Characters who opt to **Flee** in spite of this warning should make an additional check against **Stealth, Sense Trouble** or **Preparedness**, either at difficulty 3 (if the **Fleeing** was a success) or 5 (if it wasn't). If the character was spotted, this makes no difference to his immediate future; he'll still be sent to hospital and healed up, before his trial.

The event that led to the character being injured should be dealt with in a flashback sequence. The character could have been shot, gassed or burnt during an attack; could have been blown up by artillery fire and had to be dug out by his pals; could be suffering from trench foot or other exposure-related diseases; could be a shell-shock

Modern Medicine

The treatments available at the time would have been mixed on the spot by the nurses at the hospital, and would be administered as a paint, powder, or liquid. Pills and capsules, though technologically possible, were not commonly available. The mixtures available included such remedies as:

Sedative Expectorant Mixture, made from a combination of Camphorated Tincture of Opium, Oxymel of Squill, Syrup of Tolu, Concentrated Infusion of Cascarilla, and Water.

Stimulating Expectorant Mixture, made from a combination of Potassium Iodide, Ammonium Carbonate, Tincture of Ipecacuanha, Syrup of Tolu, Concentrated Infusion of Senega, and Water.

Aspirin and Quinine Mixture, made from Aspirin, Quinine Suplhate, Mucilage of Tragacanth, and Peppermint Water.

Laxative Iron Mixture, made from Iron and Ammonium Citrate, Magnesium Sulphate, Tincture of Nux Vomica, Glycerine, and Peppermint Water.

All recipes have been taken from the 1938 edition of the *Pharmacopoeia for use in Military Hospitals*, which has been assumed to be as valid for 1917 as it was twenty one years later. Additives for taste included Cinnamon, Syrup of Orange, Aniseed and Chloroform, among others. Natural remedies (such as valerian) and narcotics (e.g. cocaine, morphine) were also prescribed.

This was also a time in which medical techniques were pioneered or experimented with. Lovecraft sent Herbert West to the front to practice reanimation; the electro-therapeutic device used in this scenario is based on methods proposed by Wilfrid Garton MRCS, temporary Captain RAMC, in 1917, for various nerve-related problems including muscle paralysis, shell-shock, chronic arthritis and trench feet. It was intended to deliver a charge of no more than 350 millamperes straight to the brain and spinal cord of the patient. A shock of 100 mA can be lethal.

victim; could have been shot down in an aeroplane; could have tried to shoot himself (this would be a **Fleeing** attempt) in the hope of being sent home with what was called a Blighty wound; could be suffering from a disease such as spotted fever, which is spread by lice bites. The exact nature of the incident is up to the player, and the flashback doesn't have to be played through straight away. The Keeper should feel free to leave this in reserve, to be inflicted on the character when it's dramatically appropriate.

The player should be allowed to decide where the character was injured. This may be important, since wound cases are segregated depending on injury location. All head wounds end up in the same hut, all belly wounds in the same hut, and so on. This rudimentary form of triage helps keep things simple for the doctors and nurses.

Injured characters can make a **Sense Trouble** check at difficulty 4. Those who succeed will have heard a great deal about Military Hospital Number Five from their fellow soldiers. None of it is good; it's supposed to be a real charnel shop, with a high casualty count. Success on the **Sense Trouble** allows them to increase their **Military Talk** by 2 points, to a maximum of 5.

Seeing France (Posted)

Scene Type: Introduction

This is for characters brought into the scenario as doctors or nurses posted to the Hospital. Scenes intended for them will be indicated in the text by the descriptor **Posted**. There is no benefit or detriment to being introduced in this way; it opens up some extra scenes, but the scenario does not depend on them being introduced one way or the other.

Though scenes with the **Posted** tag are intended for these characters, the characters are not limited to these scenes. Their investigations may take them elsewhere; the **Posted** tag merely refers to extra character-specific scenes that the player may uncover.

They will probably have been in Britain immediately prior to the scenario, either being trained, or recuperating from a previous posting to the Front. Their relocation will have been very sudden; orders issued, a quick trip across the Channel (dodging U-Boats on the way), a day at a depot, and before they have time to take it all in, they're in an ambulance convoy being taken to Military Hospital Number Five.

They should make a **Preparedness** check at difficulty 4 and a **Sense Trouble** at difficulty 3. Success on the **Preparedness** check means that they had the foresight to smuggle in goods from Blighty when they were posted. This can be anything they like – cigars, jam, cheese, books and so on – so long as it's relatively small and portable. It boosts their **Credit Rating** by 2 points, up to a maximum of 5. If the character would prefer to boost **Pharmacy** rather than **Credit Rating**, then the **Preparedness** success means they've brought some supplies with them, increasing **Pharmacy** by 1 point, to a maximum of 4. Success on the **Sense Trouble** means that they've heard a few things about Military Hospital Number Five, and none of it has been good. It's supposed to be a very difficult posting; staff seem to come and go with almost indecent haste, and the casualty list is very high. This boosts their **Military Talk** by 1 point, to a maximum of 4.

They'll be travelling in an ambulance driven by a VAD volunteer, **Emma**

'Cheery' Patterson. Cheery has a role later in the scenario; however she won't divulge any significant plot information at this stage. **Flattery** or **Military Talk** can get her to say (core clue):

- **Major Parker**, chief surgeon at the Hospital, is a miserable old stick who likes to grouse, but he hasn't any real authority as he's too easily overruled by the Head Nurse, **Mrs. Ogilvy**. She's a real tyrant, and is best avoided if at all possible.

Hate

Scene Type: Challenge / Introduction

The characters will not know each other prior to the scenario. By setting up a challenge that they all have to face together, this introduction should (hopefully) be accomplished.

The characters will be travelling in a vehicle convoy to Military Hospital Number Five. Vehicles in the convoy can be of almost any type; Ford trucks are the most common, but alternatives include French taxicabs, and British double-decker buses. One bright red vehicle sent to the front was a HP Sauce goods van; its colour would have made a tempting target. Often these vehicles were little changed from their civilian use. Those travelling in the bus may be uncomfortably reminded of home, as even the advertisements are there, just as if they're on a commute to work.

The ground about them is muddy and misshapen. It has been shelled many times, and it would be next to impossible for any heavy vehicle to travel off-road, as there would be a risk it would bog down or get trapped in a shell hole. The few buildings that line the road have been reduced to rubble, and the burnt-out vehicles the convoy passes testify to the dangers of the route.

The convoy is shelled. The first sign of trouble is a whirring noise overhead like a freight train speeding towards a station, and then a crump and bang as it hits the ground.

The lead vehicle is almost instantly struck and destroyed in the first few seconds of shellfire. This blocks the road, and Cheery, in the second vehicle, goes into shock (fails **Stability**) as her best friend was the driver of the lead vehicle. She stops driving, blocking the vehicles behind hers. The characters need to take action to get the convoy moving again.

A 1 point spend on **Intimidation** or **Military Talk** can get Cheery driving again, but her attack of nerves means that her **Drive** skill is reduced by 2. This is important, as the lead vehicle blocks the road and will need to be shoved aside for the convoy to proceed. A **Drive** test at difficulty 6 is required to push the burning lead vehicle out of the way; this can be an assisted test, with a character either helping Cheery or driving instead of her.

Attempting to **Drive** off-road requires a check at difficulty 8 to avoid being bogged in the mud. If the result is failure then fleeing is the only option, as the truck is stuck for good.

Fleeing at difficulty 4 allows a character to get out and run, which may be the best option if the convoy isn't going anywhere. Failure indicates that the character took a die of damage from shrapnel while trying to get under cover.

If a group of people get together they can push the burning vehicle aside so the rest of the convoy can pass, but this wants an **Athletics** check at 7; this can be an assisted check. If this is done each character involved needs to make a **Health** test at difficulty 3 or take half a die worth of damage from the flames. If this is successful then no further **Drive** checks are needed to escape, since the road is not blocked.

As smoke billows up from the lead car, the characters will see a flock (unkindness) of (**Outdoorsman** 1 point spend) ravens, flying eerily out of the greasy black smut. An **Occult** 1 point spend remembers, with a shiver, that ravens in mythology are a form of psychopomp; allegedly they gather up souls of the dead on their way to the afterlife. Nobody can recall seeing the ravens before the blast. It's as if the explosion somehow conjured them up.

Stability checks at difficulty 3 for everyone in the convoy undergoing shellfire; the difficulty increases to 4 for **Occult** users who correctly identified the ravens.

Emma 'Cheery' Patterson

Skills: Driving 6, First Aid 4, Fleeing 6, Health 6, Sanity 3, Stability 4

Emma's family are well-to-do, and all her life until now has been a pampered dream. For four months she has endured everything that the War threw at her, and she is at breaking point. Normally ruddy, healthy and happy, these days she's a skin-and-bone ghost of her former self.

Arrival at the Hospital

Scene type: Interlocutory / Introduction

The characters, having escaped the shellfire, get to Military Hospital Number Five. This is a collection of low-lying huts huddled around the remains of a larger building, possibly a farmhouse, that has been shelled and is now little more than four walls with no roof except for a makeshift tarpaulin.

Architecture (core clue) deduces that the farmhouse would have been part of a much larger estate, and judging by the

Military Hospital Number Five

Hospitals are positioned in scattered clusters as close to the Front as possible. Injured soldiers are first sent to a Clearing Station, where their wounds are dressed and their condition assessed. From the Clearing Station they are then sent to a Hospital, one of several such installations scattered over a several square mile area, each identified with a number. The number is purely an identifier; it has no other significance.

Transport is via ambulance, run from a central depot that services the Clearing Stations and Hospitals, which is operated by a VAD (Volunteer Aid Detachment) unit staffed by civilians, all of them women. The drivers are responsible for the condition and upkeep of their ambulances, and the stress of the job often means that the drivers are worn out very quickly. The term 'seeing France-rs' describes a driver who volunteers for VAD duty only to quit as soon as things get too difficult for them.

The hospitals are scattered over a wide area in part because the rear staging area is a tempting target. The ambulances are regularly shelled, the hospitals bombarded by aircraft. Entire hospitals can be wiped out by enemy attack. Even without this the grumble of shellfire is always in the background, and aircraft regularly duel overhead.

Once at a hospital the wounded are segregated by injury. All leg wounds are in the same tent or hut, all arm wounds ditto, and so on. This is for ease of identification. An exhausted doctor doesn't want to have to guess what's wrong with a patient.

The hospital is, theoretically, run by the doctors, who have been given temporary military rank for the duration of their service. The chief surgeon will be a Major, with the other doctors typically being Captains. However the day-to-day work of the unit is done by the Nurses, who are under the command of the Head Nurse. The nurses will all be under Military Regulations and will operate in much the same way as a military unit, unlike the doctors who are still civilians at heart. The nurses are a mixed batch; some will have been military or Red Cross before the war, others volunteers, and the volunteers can be anything from newly fledged professionals to Catholic nuns. The doctors have some latitude for experimentation (hence the electro-therapeutic device) and there are new and interesting cases, (eg. shell-shock victims), appearing all the time. The war is a chance for an ambitious surgeon to establish a reputation.

As the hospitals are in a rear sector, there are people all around. Some Belgians still live in their shattered towns and farms, even going so far as to keep up the tradition of weekly Market Days. Messengers are always going to and from the front, not all of whom would be regular soldiers; the Belgian army used Boy Scouts, not being able to spare an able-bodied man to do the job. Soldiers may try to visit wounded pals. Captured enemy soldiers may shuffle past, being herded to temporary internment camps, later to be shipped to a more permanent home. Military Police are often here, looking out for potential deserters. Though the land roundabout may be blasted to fragments, there are always signs of life.

In theory if a soldier is injured badly enough (a Blighty wound) they can be sent back to England for further treatment or rest. Sometimes this meant special treatment, as with Indian troops who would have been sent to the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, which had been set up to meet their dietary and religious needs; an important consideration for an army that vividly remembered the Indian Mutiny. However though some of the characters may deserve such treatment, they will not get out of Military Hospital Number Five in time.

remaining building (long, with small loop windows adapted for musket fire), probably dated back to the late medieval period, when sturdy houses like this would have to act as miniature fortresses, defending the occupants against a hostile world. However most of the original features have been blasted to atoms, and only part of the long house remains.

The characters will either await aid if **Injured**, or need to report to the ranking officer if **Posted**. The Hospital is always chaotic (see *"Military Hospital Number Five"*) and with the arrival of a new batch of wounded things get no better. The Head Nurse will keep **Posted** characters busy, acting in the name of Major Parker, while **Injured** have slightly more leisure to observe and take independent action. This will be their first taste of what life is like at Military Hospital Number Five.

Gurdip Dal, a colonial volunteer, one of the walking wounded, insists on helping the nurses, marching about like a sergeant-major, and does his best to assist the wounded even though he only has one working arm. He is one of Zenna's special helpers, which is why the other nurses tolerate him; even Mrs. Ogilvy can't put a stop to Miss Burton's helpful initiatives.

Occult (1 point) or **Languages** (Hindi) notes:

- Dal is chanting a prayer under his breath. It is an invocation to Kali in her role as the Destroyer, the One who Finishes. He is asking the Goddess to take each of the wounded into Her care.

Outdoorsman (core clue) notices several ravens, perched around the encampment, who don't seem to be disturbed by the flurry of activity. Several of them are making vocalizations, clicks and calls, and a

1 point **Outdoorsman** point spend recalls that ravens are capable of mimicking human speech. A 1 point **Occult** spend notices:

- Several of the ravens are making sounds that closely resemble the prayer being muttered by Gurdip Dal. It's almost as if the birds are helping him invoke Kali, acting as a Greek chorus to his coryphaeus.

Several nurses, including Zenna Borden, help unload the wounded and send them to their appointed beds. Walking wounded (which should include the **Injured** characters) are allowed some freedom of movement and aren't required to be in bed all of the time, but are encouraged by the nurses to stay in their hut.

The priest, Pombal, is also here, helping unload the wounded, possibly giving last rites to anyone who died along the way. He argues with Zenna Borden, and 1 point of **Languages** (French) or Theology guesses that Pombal is upset that Dal is being allowed to practice 'pagan rituals' in connection with the wounded men. Pombal believes that Dal is imperilling the souls of the wounded.

Cheery will be in a state of shock, but functional, working like an automaton. **Medicine** (1 point) spots the shock, and also that Cheery is in the habit of taking stimulants, probably a long-term habit judging by the state of her. She has the shakes badly, and is just about keeping herself under control. Zenna Borden is her supplier, and a further **Medicine** spend sees Borden pass Cheery a bottle that could only have come from the Hospital dispensary. If accused, even under **Interrogation** or **Military Talk** Cheery denies the whole incident, and keeps up her denials even in the face of the most damning evidence. Only **Reassurance** (1 point, due to her terror and loyalty to Borden) can get through to Cheery, and even then she admits nothing, but begs the character forget the whole thing and tries to swear them to secrecy about her drug habit. She admits to taking stimulants and says that Borden has been very kind to her. She'll never get Borden into trouble if she can help it. However the character who spends the **Reassurance** has gotten through to Cheery, and will be able (in a later scene, see *"Cheery"*) to get her to reveal all the cult's secrets without additional point spend.

Pombal asks for Help

Scene Type: Core

Pombal knows that something is wrong and is doing his best to uncover the truth. Characters may attempt to approach him or he may approach them, if he thinks he can either get them to spy for him or tell him useful information.

Pombal is tall, with a spreading belly and thick black beard. He is nearsighted and is never without his glasses. He has the soft, unformed physique of a man who never works if he can help it, and a pale, studious face.

Pombal has some core clues to reveal:

- **Military Talk:** The hospital is effectively run by Mrs. Ogilvy, the Head Nurse. She's a sadistic, officious busybody who runs the Nursing section with a rod of iron. Even the doctors are afraid of her.

- **Medicine**: There have been several suspicious deaths. The death rate at the Hospital is very high, and there have been cases where Pombal has seen men who would surely have recovered, die within days of arrival. Pombal is not sure who is behind the deaths, but thinks it is all being done to some greater purpose.

- **Theology**: The Indian, Gurdip Dal, is one step away from Satanism, according to Pombal. The Frenchman believes that Dal has some kind of influence over the nurses, and is spreading his heathen practices, possibly even murdering men in some ritualistic sacrificial manner. [Pombal has this mixed in his head with old stories of Thuggee. He has Dal cast in the role of coven leader, which is not the case at all, though he is a cult member.]

- **Occult:** Pombal is convinced that the Hospital is plagued with evil spirits. He blames this on the perverse influence of Dal. He claims that the ravens 'know too much' and that they whisper secrets in the ear of their diabolic master. He claims to have seen them suckling at Dal, in the manner of a Satanic familiar.

He will ask any character to keep watch and tell him about anything unusual they may see. He says that the fate of the entire camp may be at stake, and urges them to be careful. Men have died here before now; the characters could be next.

Sense Trouble (difficulty 2) notices that one of the walking wounded at the Hospital is eavesdropping on the conversation. This man is a cult sympathiser, and soon after this incident Pombal will go missing.

The Cult of Mordiggan

The antagonists believe that they have found a way out of the horror of war, and want to spread that belief. They are

always on the lookout for new recruits among the wounded, and while they are not as keen to bring a civilian into their secret, they wouldn't pass up the opportunity if it arose.

Therefore their attitude towards the characters is first to attempt to subvert them, and only if that fails will they try something more drastic.

Most of the cultists are wounded men. Zenna Borden is the leader and the only uninjured member, but the cult will continue even if Zenna is somehow taken out of the picture. If that should happen then the cult would immediately try to invoke Mordiggan, with results as described in a later scene. See page 27.

Important members of the cult include:

Zenna Borden, acting as high priestess. Zenna seems almost too slight and slender for the work she does, yet she never tires or shows signs of weakness. Though her role is important, the cult will still be able to attempt a summoning of Mordiggan without her.

Skills: Assess Honesty 4, Bureaucracy 6, Credit Rating 2, Filch 2, Fleeing 6, Health 8, Occult 2, Sanity 3, Stability 4, Sense Trouble 2, Scuffling 3, Weapons 1

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

Gurdip Dal, former havildar 6th Jat Light Infantry, injured during a gas attack on his dugout. His brother Sunil died in that attack, and Gurdip feels great shame and loss, as Gurdip stole the gas mask that Sunil would have used in order to survive.

Skills: Athletics 4, Credit Rating 1, Firearms 6, Health 5, Intimidation 8, Languages 1 (English), Military Talk 8, Sanity 3, Stability 4, Scuffling 6, Stealth 4, Shadowing 4, Weapons 8

Weapon: Knife gabion, +0

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

Maurice Parker-Bowles, Lieutenant in the Artist's Rifles, and a member of the Royal Academy. In the last offensive Parker-Bowles was crumped by an artillery blast that destroyed his eyesight. He'd do anything to be able to see again.

Skills: Athletics 2, Art 5, Art History 4, Credit Rating 5, Firearms 3 (effectively 0 due to blindness), Health 4, Interrogation 5, Military Talk 4, Sanity 3, Stability 3, Scuffling 2 (effectively 0 due to blindness).

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

Corporal Richard 'Dicky' Fallon, of King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who suffers from shellshock. He's terrified of the electro-therapeutic device, as his mother died of an electric shock, and visions of the machine haunt his nightmares.

Skills: Athletics 6, Credit Rating 1, Fleeing 8, Firearms 4, Health 6, Intimidation 3, Sanity 3, Stability 3, Scuffling 10, Weapons 4

Weapon: small knife, -1

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

Sergeant-Major 'Duff' Carter, of King's Royal Rifle Corps, whose left leg is gone from just below the knee, and who may be a gangrene case; the doctors are waiting to see if they have to amputate more of his leg. In civilian life Carter is a gamekeeper and cricketer, and dreads being a cripple.

Skills: Athletics 6 (effectively 4 due to injury), Credit Rating 2, Firearms 6, Health 6, Intimidation 6, Military Talk 6, Sanity 3, Stability 4, Scuffling 8, Weapons 6

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

Other cult members should be designed by the Keeper as needed, bearing in mind that the fundamental point behind each of them is that they have been disfigured or injured, and want things to return to normal, which is why they've turned to Zenna Burton for help.

Night Time Perambulations (Injured)

Scene Type: Transition / Antagonist Action

The cult holds a ceremony, which means that several of the wounded members will get out of bed and make their way to the crypt. Not all of the cult are walking wounded; some will have to be helped by their friends.

The characters will first become aware of this when they hear stealthy movement. It's the dead of night, and there are no lights of any kind. The last time a nurse came on inspection was over an hour ago; there shouldn't be anyone moving about. (Military Talk core clue).

Cult members who are Interrogated or subjected to **Military Talk** admit nothing; they say they're cramped and the room is too hot, so they're going out for a smoke. It's against Regulations, but they don't care. They don't try to run away – it's not as if they could get very far in their state – and won't resist if a character tries to intercept them. However unless a character physically restrains the cultist, all night long, the cultist will make repeated attempts to get to the ceremony.

Reassurance (core clue) gets better results. A cultist who thinks that the character is on their side will confide that they want to see 'the nurse' because 'she can take the pain away.' They won't go any further than that since the character isn't a fellow cultist, but they will say that the character might benefit from the nurse's treatment. See further, '*Meeting with a Cult Member.*'

If too much noise is made, this alerts the nursing staff, and soon afterward Mrs. Ogilvy turns up breathing fire and slaughter. Patients aren't supposed to be making a fuss after lights-out; it's against all the Regulations. Mrs. Ogilvy will tie all offenders down to their beds; this can include characters. **Military Talk** (core clue) knows that this is against Regulations, but nobody seems prepared to stop Mrs. Ogilvy and the other nurses are obviously afraid of her. This will stop cultists from getting to the ceremony, and after this no amount of **Reassurance** will persuade the cultist that the character is sympathetic. Those tied to their beds won't be released until the next morning, no matter what; the nurses will be too frightened of Mrs. Ogilvy to listen to any pleas.

Characters who attempt to follow cultists need to make a **Stealth** check at difficulty 3. Success means that the character can follow the cultist to the gathering at the crypt, where a group of them have gathered to make their sacrifices to Mordiggan. See *The Anointed* on page 26.

Meeting with a Cult Member

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

If the characters come into contact with the cult, either Injured or Posted, the cult will try to sound them out to see how receptive they are to joining.

Cult members are all allied soldiers who have been badly wounded, shell shocked, or are otherwise physically or mentally scarred. Any of the cult members (see *"The Cult of Mordiggan"*) could be the one to do this, including one of the Keeper's creation.

Credit Rating has a role to play. Cultists who are common soldiers (**Credit Rating** 2 or lower) will not be comfortable talking to anyone of

Middle Class or above. On the other hand, someone like Lieutenant Parker-Bowles can deal with both officers and men, though he may inadvertently patronize anyone of less than Middle Class. Therefore it makes a difference whether the cultist sought out the character or the character discovered the cultist; if the former then the cultist is probably the same **Credit Rating** as the character, but if the latter then the **Credit Rating** may be very different. Military Talk may be used to overcome **Credit Rating** problems.

The cultist will say:

- That there are people in the camp who are trying to make things right.
- 'Making things right' means healing the sick, but it also means putting things as they were before the war started. The cultist is vague on this point, because the cultist doesn't really know how this will be done. It all seems so clear during the meetings, but it gets a little fuzzy afterward . . .
- The group is led by 'The Nurse.' They won't give Zenna Borden's name until they can be sure that the character is on their side, but clearly the Nurse is very important, almost beloved.
- The group is united by a hatred of death and war, and a desire to somehow turn the clock back and make it as though the war never happened.
- If the character is interested, the cultist can put them in touch with senior members of the group who can take things further.

Assess Honesty (core clue) shows that the cultist is perfectly sincere and does not want the character to come to any harm. If anything, he wants to help the character. Use of **Intimidation** or similar abilities cuts off the conversation; the cultist will shut up and deny all knowledge of the group, the nurse, or any meetings. Cultists cannot be browbeaten into revealing secrets. Their fear and loathing of death and the war, coupled with their love of Zenna Borden and the relief from pain that she offers, outweigh any threats the characters might bring to bear. **Military Talk** does not count as intimidation.

Meeting with a Senior Cult Member

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

This happens only if, in a previous scene, the character has sufficiently impressed a cult member, and persuaded the cultist to recommend the character for membership.

Senior members include Gurdip Dal, Lieutenant Parker-Bowles, RSM Carter and Corporal Fallon; see also *The Cult of Mordiggan*, page 15.

The senior member will want to know more about the character: who they are, what regiment they belonged to, what actions they fought in, and, most importantly, how seriously injured they are. The more damaged, the more likely it is that the character will be an enthusiastic convert. A 1 point spend of **Military Talk** ought to convince the senior member that all is well, but this cost may increase to 2 points if the character is of sufficiently different social class (**Credit Rating**) or is not British Army (eg. is Belgian, a civilian, etc); all doctors and nurses count as civilians for the purpose of this point spend. If **Military Talk** is not available **Reassurance** will work, but the minimum spend is 2 points.

If this is unsuccessful, presumably because the character did not want to spend points, or had insufficient points to spend, then the contact goes nowhere. The senior member passes the whole episode off as 'talking shop', just military gossip, and refuses to initiate the character into the deeper cult mysteries.

If this is successful, then the senior member has core clues to offer:

- **Occult**: The senior member belongs to a group of people dedicated to restoring the health of its members, and 'making things right.' This means, in some cases, bringing the dead back to life; Gurdip Dal, for example, wants to resurrect his brother Sunil, as well as heal his crippled arm. They do this by appealing to 'the great God, Death', in his chosen temple.
- **Military Talk**: The cult members are disenchanted with the war and the military generally. They think the conflict has been a waste of life on a massive scale, and no longer believe in 'the lies' told them by their generals and politicians. They intend to desert as soon as possible after the final ceremony.
- **Architecture**: The senior member lets enough slip that the character can deduce the chosen temple is somewhere close by, underground, and probably a cellar of some kind. In fact it must be somewhere in the Hospital. The entrance is marked with a bit of marble, with the inscription VIXANN on it (lit. vixit annus, or lived for [an unknown number] of years), an abbreviation often seen on Roman tomb burials.

If the conversation has gone this far, then the senior member will invite the character to the next cult meeting. See also *The Anointed*.

One Thing After Another (Posted)

Scene type: transition / antagonist action

The characters settle in to their first few working days at Military Hospital Number Five. The intent of this section is to show the inner workings of the Hospital to **Posted** characters and to introduce antagonists who will be important to later events. Not all of these things have to happen to each **Posted** character in succession, but all **Posted** characters should get a taste of what life is like at the Hospital, which in turn should give them ideas about where to look for clues later.

Athletics or **Preparedness** checks at difficulty 4 avoids total exhaustion, as the surgery is constantly busy and the schedule is brutal. There is never enough time to get everything done, new wounded arrive every hour, and there are not enough staff for the work at hand. Failure means future **Health** checks are at increased difficulty of +2, due to fatigue.

Military Talk or **Bureaucracy** (core clue) allows the character to understand the inner workings of the Hospital. Although the doctors are nominally in control it is the nurses who do all the work and who more or less run the Hospital. The nurses are all terrified of Mrs. Ogilvy, who rules with an iron fist and assigns severe punishments for the most minor infractions. Moreover Mrs. Ogilvy has almost total control over Major Parker, which means that, although strictly under the Regulations she shouldn't be able to, she can also issue punishments for the Doctors by getting Major Parker to ratify anything she demands. The only nurse who isn't afraid of her is Zenna Borden, who, because of her near-perfect record and the goodwill of her patients, seems to be able to get through her daily routine without falling foul of the Head Nurse.

Medicine or **Biology** (1 point) realizes that the insanitary and cramped conditions, coupled with the lack of available surgeons, is adding to the casualty list. Malnutrition and vermin infestation is doing its bit to send bodies to the cemetery. The peculiar swamp-smell of gangrene lingers in all of the huts.

Attempting to do something about it (eg. by cleaning a hut, or ordering nurses to do it), invokes the wrath of Mrs. Ogilvy, who will do her best to punish the character with extra duty, provoking a **Health** check at difficulty 3 (or more) to avoid ½ die of damage due to overwork.

Mrs. Ogilvy will also do her best to strip characters of their **Credit Rating**. Technically under the Regulations the Head Nurse is required to confiscate all outside items – e.g. liquor, food, essentially all the barter goods that the character may have brought in – and keep them until the owner leaves the Hospital. This usually only applies to nurses and patients, and is often ignored, but Mrs. Ogilvy sticks to the letter of the Regulations in the hope of getting bribes. **Military Talk** and **Intimidation** won't work on her or her cronies, but **Bureaucracy, Flattery** and **Bargain** will. Every point spent on keeping Mrs. Ogilvy at bay saves a point of **Credit Rating**, unless **Bureaucracy** is used, in which case each point spent saves two points **Credit Rating** as the character proves to know the Regulations better than the Head Nurse. Alternatively **Credit Rating** (essentially bribes) will also work, on a one point spent equals one point saved basis.

Medicine (core clue) leads to a talk with Captain Watts about his electro-therapeutic device. Captain Watts is very keen on his new treatment, which he believes will lead to a revolution in nerve therapy. The device is relatively simple, being two batteries attached by a resistor to a metal cap, which is fitted to the patient's head. The current is controlled by two switches, one per battery. Captain Watts has permission from the Major to use his device in controlled studies, and is always looking for new test subjects. **Mechanical Repair** (1 point) notices that the device is simple and functional, but does have the potential to be lethal. **Assess Honesty** (1 point) may reveal that there have been two deaths so far among Watts' test subjects, which Watts is reluctant to discuss, but he claims that this was not the fault of the device. He's blinded by his 'successes' and thinks that the deaths were accidental. He has removed any mention of the deaths from his official documentation.

Pombal, the French priest, is always coming and going, working with the sick and administering last rites to the dying. **Bureaucracy** (core clue) notes that he can't get any cooperation from the nursing staff, (as he's fallen foul of Mrs. Ogilvy once too often), and that the doctors pay almost no attention to him. Anyone who treats him kindly – e.g. by speaking to him in his own language (**Linguistics**: French) or by **Reassurance** (1 point) may get him to open up. See further *Pombal asks for Help* page 15.

Occult (core clue) notices that the ravens seen earlier don't leave the Hospital, except when there is a burial party. During the day they gather on or near the half-destroyed farmhouse, muttering amongst themselves, but when a truck leaves with shroud-wrapped corpses for the burial ground one or two of their number go with it, following it to the cemetery and back. It's almost as though they are accompanying the dead on their final journey. Moreover more ravens are joining the flock every day; it's as if each death brings another raven to the Hospital.

Medicine (core clue) notices that, shortly after being given a sedative mixture, several of the patients seem to be no better; if anything, the pain is much worse, and the victim is in agony. The medicine was given by Zenna Borden as part of her redistribution of pain (see *The Bell Tolls* page 22) but to find out who gave the patients the medicine requires a **Shadowing** check at difficulty 5. If caught, Zenna claims that she mixed the medicine correctly, so there ought not to be a problem. **Assess Honesty** (1 point) shows that she's not truthful, and in fact seems oddly triumphant or gloating. Mrs. Ogilvy, if brought in, might assign Zenna extra punishment duties but will resent interference from outsiders in her domain, and will look to do them harm in the future.

Checkmate

Scene Type: Alternate / Investigation

Once the characters become aware that there is a cult they may try to tell who's in, and who's out. This means they will need to question staff and patients, an activity that could be combined with *Bribery and Corruption*.

Oral History, Reassurance, Military Talk and possibly **Intimidation** could prove useful here. Bribes, as with **Credit Rating**, are less useful, since the cult is tight-knit and resistant to betraying secrets.

Cult members can generally be identified in the following ways:

- They are optimistic about their chances of recovery, even though their wounds are severe; even those who have lost limbs or senses think they'll get everything back just as it was.
- They reject all forms of religion, and will not abide visits from a priest.
- Though their injuries are often crippling, if not life-threatening, they show few symptoms of pain and seem to be in relatively good health, given the circumstances.
- They are regularly visited by the nurse, Zenna Borden, and by Gurdip Dal.
- The ravens show keen interest in them. At least one of the birds seems to be watching each cultist, every hour of the day.

Shadowing can be useful once a cult member has been identified, since they all communicate with each other. Following one member can lead to identifying several others, and following Zenna or Gurdip can give the character a very good idea of the total number of cultists.

Skeletons in the Closet

Scene type: Alternate (Physical Evidence)

The character may realize that faulty (tainted) medication is being given to patients.

To find out what was given, they will need to look in the Pharmacist's Supply Closet. This closet is kept locked during the day; only the Head Nurse is supposed to have keys to it. However **Evidence Collection** shows that the lock is simple and has been picked, probably more than once judging by the scratches on the lock plate. The Cupboard is right next to the Head Nurse's office, so characters will need to be careful (**Stealth** may prove useful) not to arouse Mrs. Ogilvy. Unless the characters are prepared to **Filch** the keys (when not in use they are kept in Mrs. Ogilvy's office, in her desk drawer), **Locksmith** will be needed to get into the cupboard, but the lock is so pitifully simple that this is an easy task.

The contents of the closet are kept in fairly good order on the whole, but there are several empty bottles, some of the labels are missing or badly smudged, some of the more uncommon supplies (all the stimulants) are missing altogether, and there are some bottles which don't resemble any of the usual medical supplies, filled with a pale green liquid.

- **Bureaucracy** or **Military Talk** (1 point): This is clearly unacceptable under the Regulations, and as the Head Nurse is ultimately in charge of the closet, it is her who should be blamed. It's especially serious as it appears that essential supplies have been pilfered, possibly for sale or illicit use.
- Mrs. Ogilvy, if tackled directly, will try bluff first, and if that doesn't work, bribery. She knows full well that the closet is not in good order, but claims to be too busy to deal with it. *'If the doctors won't keep things in good order, I don't see what I can do,'* is her fallback position. However this will cow the Head Nurse, and thereafter make her much easier to deal with.
- Reporting this to authority, in this case Major Parker, will mean trouble for Mrs. Ogilvy. Though Major Parker will be unwilling to believe accusations made against the Head Nurse, the incident is serious enough to bring in the Military Police (see also *"Exposing the Cult"*; the stolen drugs incident will be investigated in the same way as a murder). In this event Mrs. Ogilvy will eventually be taken away, but this may take a day or two to happen while the police carry out their investigation.
- **Pharmacy** (1 point): The green liquid is unidentifiable. It doesn't resemble anything in the military

Exposing the Cult

The players may be tempted to reveal all, or at least as much as they know, to the relevant authorities as soon as they discover what's going on.

The relevant authority in this instance is Major Parker. He's the ranking officer, but his reaction will be to put the Head Nurse in charge of any subsequent investigation. This is his default setting; he's intimidated by her, and she knows it.

Mrs. Ogilvy is the camp tyrant. She likes having everyone under her thumb, and will resent outsiders involving themselves in the day-to-day routine of 'her' Hospital. For her, investigating any breach in discipline is less about stamping out a problem and more about punishing anyone she doesn't like, and this may include the characters, particularly if they've been incautious enough to cause a fuss. Any investigation headed by her will go nowhere fast, but there will be a lot of people on latrine duty, ambulance cleaning, tea orderly duty, and so on. If there's a dirty job going, Mrs. Ogilvy can find someone who needs punishment.

The only thing she can't cover up is a death, so things change either after Pombal's corpse is discovered or after antagonist reaction/protagonist action results in an obvious murder.

At that point the MPs are brought in. Captain Parkes and Sergeant Oakham will be the investigative team, and they'll be making discreet inquiries – at least, as discreet as military policemen ever get. Neither of them are stupid but they place no faith in the supernatural; they're looking for a killer, not a death cult. If they are brought in, then the cult reaction will be to offer up a scapegoat. Gurdip Dal, or someone similar, will confess to murdering Pombal, for example. The police will arrest the offender and then leave, which allows the cult to get on with their dark business once more.

If the crypt is discovered this shakes up the camp. The discovery has the makings of a major scandal. All the more reason for the incident to be squashed; Mrs. Ogilvy will be only too pleased to hush things up. Even the military police won't be keen to investigate the crypt. They'll be too worried about what their superiors might say, if they uncover something that can't be hushed up. The contents may be taken out and burned, but that's all. This won't stop the cult; they don't need the altar to carry out their rituals. It's convenient, but not absolutely necessary.

If Zenna Borden is somehow taken out of the picture the Keeper should remember that this does not destroy the cult. The cult numbers perhaps twenty people in the hospital; unless they can somehow all be dealt with, the cult's activities will continue.

Characters should also bear in mind that direct action on their part could have serious consequences. Killing Zenna Borden, for example, eliminates an important cult member, but it also means that the MPs will be called in, and this time it may be the characters who get arrested for murder. Characters should be warned of this possibility should they plan murder.

The chief difficulty that the characters face is not so much the cult as a cult; it's that the members of the cult are on the same side as they are. The characters can't just shoot them. They need to find a more subtle way of dealing with the problem.

Mrs. Ogilvy (Head Nurse)

Skills: Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 8, First Aid 4, Health 8, Intimidation 9, Sanity 6, Stability 6, Stealth 4

Mrs. Ogilvy is a hard-faced, grasping woman, a career nurse for whom the war has been an excellent chance for rapid promotion. She revels in her new authority and does her best to make sure that everyone knows how important she is. She has a knack for finding out other people's weaknesses and exploiting them, which is how she has such a hold over Major Parker.

Major Parker (Commanding Officer)

Skills: Athletics 1, Credit Rating 5, First Aid 6, Health 7, Medicine 8, Sanity 5, Stability 7

Major Parker is a diffident, absent-minded man. When not in surgery he seems indecisive, if not entirely without a brain; in surgery, he's an authoritarian, and an absolute master of his craft. Mrs. Ogilvy controls him through a combination of brute force and bribery; she knows his weakness for sweets, particularly Turkish Delight, and keeps him supplied.

Captain Parkes (Military Policeman)

Skills: Athletics 4, Evidence Collection 4, Forensics 2, Firearms 4, Health 7, Interrogation 6, Scuffling 6, Sanity 8, Stability 6

Weapons: Webley Revolver +0

Sergeant Oakham (Military Policeman)

Skills: Athletics 8, Evidence Collection 1, Firearms 6, Health 10, Interrogation 4, Intimidation 6, Scuffling 10, Sanity 8, Stability 5

Weapons: Webley Revolver +0

Both Parkes and Oakham were policemen in civilian life. Parkes is a long-limbed, slow-talking Cornishman who thinks slowly but covers every single eventuality, very thoroughly. Oakham is a short, muscular Glaswegian, a bundle of energy whose preferred investigative style is "*You did it! Confess!*" interrogation.

pharmacopeia. It might be something brought in from outside, of course, perhaps bought on the black market. It resembles a sedative mixture, and has a pungent, sickly smell not unlike raw Opium.

- **Health** checks at difficulty 4 are required of anyone who drinks/injects the green liquid. The target suffers strange and vivid hallucinations before sinking into shock. If the **Health** check is failed the target takes 1 die damage; even if successful the target still suffers the hallucinations and falls unconscious for a time. The visions are of someone else's life. Essentially the target is suffering another man's pain, which means they experience the events associated with that pain. The trauma depends on the person who suffered it in the first place, and so the nature of the visions is up to the Keeper. Treat this event in the same way as a flashback, except that the events happened to someone else and not to the character. Examples include: shivering in a flooded shell crater, clinging on to a bit of wreckage so as not to drown; blasted by an artillery shell, to discover as the character struggles to his feet that his right arm is missing at the elbow; watching a great greasy cloud of poison gas seep over the battleground, knowing that there is no gas mask to be had.

The Bell Tolls

Scene Type: Core (Physical Evidence)

Men are dying at the Hospital all the time, but some of them are helped on their way by Nurse Borden. In this scene, characters see what happens as a result of her actions.

A soldier, perhaps a patient if **Posted**, or someone in the next bed if **Injured**, takes a sudden turn for the worse. The chirpy little infantryman seemed all right an hour ago, but now he's sinking fast. His pallor is marked, his breathing is heavy, and very soon after this he'll slip into a coma from which he will not awaken.

Core clues include:

- **Medicine**: The injuries suffered should not have been fatal. Though he was wounded, there was every reason to think this soldier would make a full recovery. It's almost as if the soldier was suffering from severe shock; thready pulse, pale and mottled skin tone, dilated pupils – all the classic symptoms are there, yet there surely was no reason for this condition either to develop suddenly or to slip by unnoticed.

- **Occult**: As soon as the symptoms started to develop, a raven took up position just outside the tent, watching the sufferer. With each worsening symptom the bird seemed to get more and more agitated. When the soldier died, the bird flew up into the air, letting out an almost human shriek. It's as if the creature somehow knew what was happening, and waited for its chance to act – possibly to seize the dead man's soul as it left the body.

- **Pharmacy**: There's a strong smell of Opium, as if the dead man had been given some medication shortly before the incident, possibly a sedative mixture. Yet there's no notation on his chart to show that a sedative was required, or administered.

Stability check at difficulty 3, increased to 4 for those who understood the full impact of the **Occult** core clue.

Where is Pombal?

Scene Type: Core / Physical Evidence

After discovering information, the characters may try to discuss it with Pombal.

The priest is nowhere to be found. He has a little tent set aside for him, but he is not there, and if the characters ask, nobody at the Hospital can recall seeing him in some time.

Pombal's tent is messy, and **Evidence Collection** (core clue) notices that his glasses, broken, have been trodden into the mud just outside the tent opening. There are several footprints here, some of which are of civilian shoes (probably Pombal) while others are military boots. A 1 point **Evidence Collection** spend realizes that the boot marks could not have been made by regular army boots; they're of an unusual type, exactly the kind of boot that colonial soldiers like Gurdip Dal might wear. One boot mark is right over the glasses, indicating that the wearer was the one to crush them.

Outdoorsman (1 point) allows the boot marks to be tracked back to the ambulances. Peculiar marks follow the boots, as though something large and heavy was dragged through the mud. Several shrouded corpses are stacked in the back of one of the ambulances, awaiting a burial detail.

One of the shrouded corpses is Pombal. His shroud was hastily wrapped around him, unlike the neater work done on the other dead, which can be noticed with **Evidence Collection** (core clue). Also, unlike the others, Pombal was still bleeding when he was put into the back of the truck, and consequently his shroud became stiffened with dried blood.

Pombal's throat was cut from ear to ear with a sharp, bladed weapon like a bayonet,

The Role of Mordiggan

The cult have been able to contact Mordiggan in part because the Hospital is located on a spot that was once a place of power for him, but mainly because, thanks to the War, Mordiggan's influence is reaching more people than it ever did before. Similar outbreaks may have occurred at other times in history – during the Black Death, for example – but this is the event that shapes Mordiggan's influence over Man in the twentieth century.

The cult believes that appeals to Mordiggan's better nature will save them. They think that sufficient devotion, coupled with regular sacrifices, will allow them to escape the War with their bodies (though possibly not their souls) intact.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Mordiggan will not be cheated. The God has no real interest in worship; everyone comes to Death in the end. However the cult has stumbled onto a technique that allows them to pass their suffering on to other people, which, from Mordiggan's point of view, is perfectly acceptable. So long as someone suffers the pain, and dies, Mordiggan is indifferent as to who does so.

Where this goes wrong for the cult is in their assumption that Mordiggan will let them go even if they offer up no suffering. Their final ritual will be an appeal to the God to heal them and free them from the War, but this time there will be no transfers of pain to other people. To Mordiggan, this is worse than theft, and it is this which will provoke the God into destroying the Hospital and everyone in it.

The ravens are Mordiggan's eyes and ears. Through them, the God is made aware of the cult's worship and sacrifices. Occult (core clue) may remember the Norse eddas, and the tales of Huginn and Muninn, Thought and Memory, who flew from Odin's shoulders to the hanged and slain. Through their information gathering, Odin became the wisest of the Norse Gods. These creatures at the Hospital are not real birds, but projections, manifestations of the Charnel God, and their growing numbers indicate Mordiggan's increasing interest in events at the Hospital. **Outdoorsman** (core clue) will think this strange. Ravens, like all corvids, are social creatures, but even so, rarely do they gather in such large numbers.

Ravens

Abilities: Athletics 6, Health 4, Scuffling 8, Shadowing 8

Hit Threshold: 4 (small) or 3 (man-sized)

Weapon: Claws +1, Beak +0

Armour: none

Stability Loss: +0

Description: Though these appear as normal birds at first glance, their inky bodies are mutable, rippling and changing. As this only happens when they are not being directly looked at the effect is only noticed out of the corner of the watcher's eye. Their eyes are near human in their expressiveness. In combat, their talons grow to twice normal size, and their beaks are razor sharp. If 'killed', they dissolve into shadow.

which probably had a curved blade, and there are markings on the wound which suggest a ragged cutting edge (**Evidence Collection** 1 point spend). Gurdip Dal owns such a weapon, a curved knife gabion with a sawback blade.

Discovery of Pombal's corpse will bring the Military Police into the scenario (see *"Exposing the Cult"*) but even if Dal is arrested this does not stop the cult, nor will Dal say anything about accomplices. He claims to have acted alone, provoked by Pombal's insults and religious intolerance.

Bribery and Corruption

Scene Type: Alternate

The character may attempt to gather information from hospital staff or patients. See also *"Checkmate"*

Posted characters will find that they get on best with the doctors and nurses, while **Injured** characters will find the patients more sympathetic. Like calls to like, and any attempt to gather information from a dissimilar group – if a **Posted** tries to talk to a patient, for example – then any point spend is increased by 1.

The best way to get information is by **Credit Rating**; bribing the informant with luxuries, or at any rate putting them at their ease with offer of a cigarette. This is a 0 point spend for similar groups, a 1 point for dissimilar.

The next best is with **Military Talk, Oral History, Flattery** or **Reassurance**. Minimum spend is 1 point.

Information to be had includes:

- The nurse, Zenna Borden, is always very helpful and seems to be everywhere. It's hard to see how she finds time to rest. She was recently on leave in England, and since then her contribution has been above and beyond the call.
- A lot of the injured peg out for no apparent reason and the doctors can't understand it. They've taken to calling it 'Watt's Disease', since it happens without rhyme or reason, much as Watt's electro-therapeutic device works without Watts really understanding why.
- Pombal is 'a worrier' who thinks too much. Still, you have to admire his nerve. He's the only one prepared to stand up to Mrs.

Ogilvy; if only he didn't waste his time chasing phantoms.

- Gurdip Dal is always around, helping wherever he can. Zenna Borden has made sure he doesn't get bothered by Mrs. Ogilvy, and the nurse and the soldier seem to be close friends.

- The place where the Hospital now is must have been a big estate, before the war. A doctor who's since been posted to another Hospital used to say that some of the bits of stone and pottery found roundabout dated back to the Romans.

His Enthusiasm is Commendable (Injured)

Scene Type: Core

Doctor Watts is on constant lookout for new test subjects for his electro-therapeutic device. An **Injured** character may become his next test subject.

Sense Trouble (Difficulty 3) realizes that something's afoot when several nurses are spotted carrying Doctor Watt's equipment to the **Injured** character's tent. Several other injured soldiers eye the device nervously. The nurses set the device down as carefully as possible and start preparations, hooking up the cables and getting the patient ready.

Fleeing might be useful (Difficulty 6), as it will get the character out of harm's way before Doctor Watts arrives. A success means that the character not only left the tent but found somewhere safe to hide. The difficult bit is avoiding the attention of the nurses, hence the high number, but this can be reduced by **Credit Rating** (bribes), with each 1 **Credit Rating** spent reducing the **Fleeing** difficulty by 2.

Doctor Watts arrives soon after the

device is set up, and from that point on **Fleeing** is impossible.

Doctor Watts is very keen to have his device accepted by the medical profession. He's preparing a paper to prove how useful it can be in cases of nerve damage. He'll take copious notes, all the while assuring the patient, in his dispassionate way, that everything's fine and that the procedure is routine.

Health checks at difficulty 4 for anyone undergoing the procedure. Failure means a dice of damage and unconsciousness; success merely means unconsciousness. If the character managed to **Flee** earlier, then this will happen to one of the other patients; the character may learn about it later.

Anyone undergoing the procedure is knocked out for a few minutes, a side effect that Watts will blame on inadequate calibration of the equipment by the nursing staff. However those who are knocked out will, on recovering, see visions. To them, the sky is a greasy red, lit by a scarlet orb, while the mud is a dark, black mass of decayed flesh. A howling noise echoes across the wasteland, which can be traced to a massive crater not far away. Yet this is no crater, for it has teeth, grinding furiously, champing and smashing together as if eager to swallow the world and everything in it. Small black blots fly and wheel in the air, which cry like ravens yet drop tears of blood. Stability check, difficulty 5 for undergoing this ordeal; a reduced Stability at difficulty 3 for merely having it told to the character by someone else. The hallucination soon fades, leaving the patient bewildered and stunned. This is a vision of Mordiggan, and the crater, if traced to its origin, was in approximately in the same spot as the temple entrance. The crater reminds **Occult** users (core clue) of the hellmouth, the entrance to damnation envisaged as a gaping maw, never sated, always ready to drag down and engulf sinners, an image that goes back as far as Anglo-Saxon mythology.

Doctor Watts

Skills: Athletics 4, Bureaucracy 4, Electrical Repair 2, First Aid 6, Health 10, Medicine 8, Mechanical Repair 2, Sanity 6, Stability 8

Watts is a busy monomaniac who believes he has found a miracle cure. He's tall, handsome and muscular, the kind of person who's never had a day's sickness in his life. He finds weakness in others strangely repellent. He won't accept responsibility for his actions if things turn out badly; to him, it's always someone else's fault.

Amateur Archaeology

Scene Type: Core (Location)

The characters may attempt to investigate the Hospital further, looking for the cult's meeting place.

Architecture (core clue) realizes that the farmstead the Hospital is based around would have been quite large in its day, probably with several outbuildings, most of which have now been destroyed. There are sufficient remnants to show that the buildings would have been typical late Medieval, but there are also signs – bits of marble and pottery mixed in with the medieval mortar – that Roman ruins may once have stood on the site. Probably those ruins were raided for stone, or the broken pottery mixed up as aggregate in the mortar. If the place hadn't been so thoroughly destroyed, it might have made an interesting archaeological find.

Architecture (1 point) realizes that some of the stones are funerary, and probably represent old tombs. The original Roman site could have been a cemetery. There are inscriptions which are characteristic of burial sites, (eg. BM or beni morenti, meaning well deserving) and a bit of digging turns up a rolled-up lead parchment with crude markings on, shoved between the funerary stones, that seems to resemble some kind of prayer. **Occult** (1 point) knows that the parchment is actually an early form of magic sometimes used by the Romans, and the inscription is meant to be a curse. Leaving the curse in a tomb or cemetery would have added to its potency. The parchment's maker intended it as an appeal to a death entity, asking it to strike down the maker's enemy. The death entity is referred to as Mordiggan.

Outdoorsman (core clue) notices that while the campground is well travelled, there is one path that is regularly used, judging by the bootmarks, but which doesn't seem to go anywhere. In fact, if followed up, it leads to the temple entrance.

Outdoorsman (1 point) notices that the ravens are gathered in knots and clumps around the Hospital, but the largest group is clustered around one particular spot. This spot is directly over the temple entrance, and the ravens will not leave it even if people approach them. This is very unusual, for birds; they ought to be nervous of people, but these ravens behave as though they own the place. If provoked or attacked, they will respond with deadly force. However they will not prevent anyone going into the temple if they so wish. They just watch, silent, sardonic; **Stability** check difficulty 3 for anyone going into the temple, under the raven's gaze.

The Anointed

Scene Type: Core / Location

The temple is based in a cellar close to the Hospital. It would at one time have been a crypt for a large building, and probably (**Architecture**: core clue) dates to the late medieval period at the least. Possibly earlier, as there are decayed wall murals painted in a style consistent with high medieval French church murals.

The images are all of the same theme: Death, as the Destroyer and harvester of men. He accepts kings and princes, paupers and peasants, scholars and merchants, into his wide, skeletal embrace. In one scene he strides among armies with his scythe, while in another he rides in a great chariot with emperors pulling in harness in place of horses. Death shows no mercy, whether to mothers or to children, rich men or poor; all bow to Him, all beg His favor, yet to each his answer is always the same. He drags them down, crushes them under His bony feet, and passes on. In many depictions He is shown eating the corpses of the dead, swallowing them whole in His greedy haste.

In the middle of the chamber is a makeshift altar, set up on what might have once been a raised Roman marble tomb. If so, the covering slab and the contents of the tomb have long since been taken away. In their place wooden planks serve as a table, and offerings have been piled in a heap. The offerings are of all sorts, from a child's toy to a gas mask, but most are bits of military equipment, even unexploded artillery shells and broken rifles, and there are many medals, from all the armies in conflict at the Front. Atop this pyramid is a skull, still barely covered by ragged skin, probably (**Medicine** 1 point) no more than eight months dead. The last jellified remnant of the eyeballs gleam in the sockets. The skull wears a crown, possibly something scavenged from a theatrical costume, of battered wire covered in threadbare gold. **Stability** check at difficulty 4, as the character's mind makes the connection between the altar and its surroundings; it's as if Mordiggan left his mark here, and the taint lingers.

At the base of the tomb is a banner made of bandages, with these words painted crudely on it: *It is arranged that men should be broken and that they should be mended.*

Lying in front of the tomb is a large basin made of lead, at the bottom of which is a slick, green liquid. This is where the pain is gathered during ceremonies; anyone who has investigated the Dispensary Cupboard (*Skeletons in the Closet*) recognizes this liquid. It smells faintly of opium, but there is not enough of it here to produce the same effect, if drunk.

This is where the cult gathers for its ceremonies. It is possible that a character has been invited to one of those ceremonies, (*Meeting with a Cult Member* and *Meeting with a Senior Cult Member*), and if so, the scene is something like this:

The group gathers after midnight. There are twenty members all told, and the chamber is not large, so the room soon starts to feel hot and enclosed. There is little light, apart from a candle that Zenna carries and a few other candles on the altar. Zenna leads the group in a prayer. At first she speaks English, then French, then another language, until it becomes less a prayer and more a jumble of apparently meaningless words, but no matter what the group follows her in the chant without missing a syllable. The strange thing is, even the meaningless words have some kind of meaning; at any rate the participants are convinced that they do, during the ceremony, though afterwards they'll have no idea what was said. In fact, Zenna is speaking in the language of Dream, which all humans can understand while they are asleep but cannot remember while they are awake. The name Mordiggan is repeated again and again, as the cult appeals to the God to spare them their pain. As the ceremony progresses, participants feel their injuries ease, (recovering 1 die of damage, though this does not re-grow missing limbs or restore lost senses), and as this happens the basin fills with the green liquid. Zenna and Gurdip will later distribute this among the other injured at the Hospital. **Stability** check at difficulty 3 for undergoing this ritual, with a further **Stability** check at 5 if the participant later realizes that their pain was passed on to another person and caused that person's death.

The ravens will be present during this ritual. They will flutter down amongst the cultists, perching next to them or on their shoulders, and the croaking noises that they make will be very like the chanting prayer.

In the final moments, Zenna claims that Mordiggan has accepted the sacrifice of pain, and is pleased. The cultists will go away content, their hopes buoyed by yet another successful ritual. However a raven turns to the character and mutters: *No hope, no pleasure, no triumph, no bargain. There is nothing you can give that He will accept; He takes what he pleases and will not be cheated*. **Stability** check difficulty 4.

Cleaning Duty

Scene type: Challenge / Antagonist Action

The characters may provoke the cult into taking direct action against them. Potential recruits who fail to impress senior cult members are potential targets, as are nurses or doctors who ask too many questions.

Gurdip Dal is sent to deal with them.

He'll attempt to ambush the character either when they are on their own, or at night, when everyone else ought to be asleep. **Sense Trouble** difficulty 2 hears Gurdip trip over a cleaning bucket carelessly left out, giving the character a chance to prepare. Otherwise the first sign of trouble is when Gurdip closes with the character, knife in hand. The target of the attack needs to make a **Stability** check difficulty 2.

Gurdip's plan is to slit the character's throat and hide the body with the other corpses being sent for burial. If caught, (and he would rather die than be captured), he refuses to say anything about the cult. He claims that he attacked the character because the character insulted his religion. This attack will be enough to get him arrested by the military police, and he will be taken away.

Occult (core clue) notices that when Gurdip was preparing to attack, the ravens began to gather, as if they expected something to happen. If the attack fails, and nobody dies, the ravens fly off, disappointed; if there is a death, they cackle and scream delightedly.

Cheery

Scene Type: Antagonist Action

Ambulances are always coming and going at the Hospital, and Cheery is a regular visitor. If the characters used **Reassurance** in previous scenes she may seek them out, as she needs advice. If this was not done, a **Reassurance, Oral History** or **Military Talk** spend (1 point) now will produce the same effect, but the character will have to seek out Cheery first.

Zenna Borden has been trying to persuade Cheery to join the cult. Zenna has plans to expand the cult's influence to other Hospitals, and wants to use Cheery as a distributor of pain. Zenna knows that the death rate at Military Hospital Number Five is unacceptably high, and she thinks that if she can spread out, giving pain to the other Hospitals, this will take the pressure off of her. She also thinks that there may be other patients in other hospitals who can be 'spared,' if they join in the cult rituals, but that means establishing satellite cults, something that she can't do on her own. Cheery would be the first recruit in a new cultist network.

Cheery is conscience-stricken. She hero-worships Zenna and would do almost anything Zenna asked, but this cult worship is more than Cheery bargained for. Cheery doesn't know what to do, and will be grateful for any advice the characters can give.

According to Cheery:

- Borden has been acting strangely ever since she went on leave. Cheery knows Borden had an abortion, and thinks that the stress of that and her time at the Hospital has driven Borden almost to breaking point.
- Cheery knows most of the senior cult members by sight (if not by name) and can show the character where the crypt is, if they don't already know.
- Cheery has a sample of the drug that Borden uses (see also *"Skeletons in the Closet"*) and can show it to characters, if asked.

The protagonists may be tempted to use Cheery's evidence to expose the cult. She knows enough to seriously harm the cultists, but her loyalty to Borden is such that she would never tell anyone in authority what she knows; she only talks to the characters because she thinks that they're sympathetic. If Cheery thinks that her information is about to be used to hurt Borden, she immediately attempts suicide, either by taking the drug herself or by some other means. If prevented, she refuses to say another word about Borden or the cult. If she takes the drug, then she dies, but before she does so she whispers:

The pain . . . o God, I never thought it would be like this . . . the ravens, don't let them get me, keep them away . . . Mordiggan . . .

Stability check difficulty 4 if Cheery commits suicide as a result of the protagonists' actions.

God's Away on Business

Scene Type: Resolution

The cult will eventually attempt their final ritual: an appeal to Mordiggan to heal them completely, and in some cases resurrect their dead (eg. Borden's baby, Gurdip's brother).

This may be provoked by protagonist action. If Borden is eliminated, for example, then the cult's reaction will be to hold this ritual as soon as possible. However the need for secrecy means that they may have to wait until nightfall. This may change if there is some event that draws people's attention away from the cult; if, for example, there is an air raid, and everyone is ordered to take cover, then while the rest of the encampment is running for the protection of the trenches the cult will be moving to the crypt.

The cult can still hold ceremonies even if their altar and the crypt are destroyed. The ceremony would still be a failure no matter where it was held; cutting them off from their temple does not cut them off from Mordiggan, as Death is all around them. Alternatives to the crypt include the surgery tent (possibly using Watt's electro-therapeutic device as a makeshift altar), an air raid bunker, an ambulance (eg. one of the buses, a vehicle big enough to accommodate them all).

Sense Trouble difficulty 3 realizes that the ravens, normally a noisy,

cackling bunch, have gone quiet. It's as if all of them, at the same time, heard a noise, and are waiting for that noise to be repeated. Just at that moment, they all take wing, flying in one great black mass, circling the Hospital.

Characters who joined the cult will be ordered to attend this final meeting. *"It's our last chance! Hurry, or you'll be too late!"*

Shadowing or **Stealth** may also be effective, as the cultists will be too eager to get to the ritual chamber to worry too much about being followed. They think that this will be the last ceremony; after today, all of their worries will be over.

The protagonists may already know where the crypt is, but if they do not, someone with **Occult** (core clue) feels a shiver down the spine, as a skeletal figure now stands over the crypt entrance. No person other than the occult user sees this creature, a wizened, bent thing dressed in the dark cloak of a *poilu,* with a rifle-bayonet in its hands, as it enters the crypt after all the cultists have gone inside. **Stability** check difficulty 3.

The cult begins its ritual. They offer up fervent prayers to Mordiggan, pleading that they be spared their pain, that their bodies be healed, that their loved ones return to life. Their hysteria grows stronger as the air in the crypt goes stale and hot; the pain, which before became a liquid and was siphoned off into a basin, is now a great green mist that covers them all, billowing like poison gas in the close confines of the temple. Though they plead, a lone hollow voice is heard to answer:

One may not escape the angel of death, nor say to him, 'Wait until I put my affairs in order,' or 'There is my son, my slave: take him in my stead.' Where the angel of death appears there is no remedy.

Yet this does not dishearten the cult, and instead they redouble their prayers.

However as the pain is now all around them, the cult is spreading a kind of mass hallucination, each member sharing his experiences with all the others. This is the means by which the protagonists can put a stop to them once and for all. If the protagonists enter into the cult's delusions, by using the pain to see into the souls of individual cultists, then the protagonists can break each cultist by destroying their delusions (and their last **Pillars of Sanity**), and if they do that then the ceremony's effect is much reduced. Mordiggan will be summoned; in fact, thanks to the cult He has already been summoned, hence the ravens and the skeletal figure. However if the ceremony's effect is reduced then Mordiggan will just destroy the cult; not the cult, the Hospital, and everything else within a few hundred square meters.

In each of these delusions the ravens are present, no matter how incongruous this may be. In some scenes they are ordinary birds. In others they may be bird-men, behaving in all ways like men, except that they do not speak, except amongst themselves. In other scenes they may be shadows, the only signal of their presence, a fluttering of wings and the gleam of eyes in the dark. In these scenes they represent the anger of Mordiggan, and will react accordingly, with growls and screams of rage. They may attack, if they are attacked, but will not initiate combat.

These delusions include:

- **Gurdip Dal**. In this vision, he and a man from his Regiment, whose face is covered by a gas mask, are in a dugout. The bunker is warm and cozy, and there is a meal cooking on the fire. Gurdip is laughing, chattering away. He offers the protagonists hospitality, tells them to make themselves comfortable. He says he will be going home soon, he and his brother. The War is over; there is no more need to fear. The quickest way to break this delusion is to remove the gas mask that the other man wears. When this is done, the bloated, greenish face of a man long-dead is revealed, and Gurdip breaks down. **Stability** check at difficulty 5, as the protagonist realizes that he has destroyed a man's sanity.

- **Lieutenant Maurice Parker-Bowles**. The scene changes to the Royal Academy, Burlington House, Picadilly, London. Everyone is standing in the courtyard. It is a beautiful spring day; hardly a cloud in the sky. It is a few minutes before the Academy is due to open to the public. Parker-Bowles stands under the statue of Sir Joshua Reynolds, holding court, talking to his public and members of the press. This is his day of triumph; his work will be exhibited at the Academy, and any minute now the doors will open. The War is over, he says, and thankfully he was spared. The quickest way to break this delusion is to open the Academy doors, revealing, instead of the galleries, a shattered battlefield behind them. **Stability** check at difficulty 5.

- '**Dicky' Fallon**. The scene changes to a small, neat suburban house, somewhere in England. In this delusion Dicky is a young boy again, no more than ten years old. He is playing soldiers up in his room, and invites the characters to join him. He has a brilliant set of toys, with brightly painted uniforms, gallant castles, and cannons that fire matchsticks. Though there are some odd noises coming from downstairs, bumps and crashes, Dicky takes no notice. There's no such thing as War, really, he tells the protagonists; Mummy wouldn't let it happen. The

quickest way to break this delusion is to take Dicky to the head of the stairs, so he can see what's happening down on the ground floor. A woman is twitching in agony, her body alive with sparks, sizzling with electrical discharge. **Stability** check at difficulty 5.

- **'Duff' Carter.** The scene changes to a quiet country lane. Off in the distance, a church bell is tolling. There's not a cloud in the sky. It's a day almost made for doing nothing at all, and Carter is determined to do just that, strolling aimlessly along the path. He's happy to chat with the protagonists. He's glad the War's over, and even more glad that he was spared. He's off to play cricket soon; the village team needs him. However he doesn't seem to be in any hurry to get there. The quickest way to destroy this delusion is to drag Carter off to the cricket field, for there's nobody there waiting for him – just a single, empty wheelchair. **Stability** check at difficulty 5.

- **Zenna Borden**. In this vision, Zenna is in the kitchen of a pleasant suburban cottage. She's busy preparing a chicken casserole, and though she's got plenty of work to do she's pleased to see the protagonists. Isn't it wonderful, she says, that they all came though without a scratch. They should all be thankful that the War is over, and pray that nothing like it ever happens again. Now she can raise a family. She offers them a cup of tea, and asks them to sit down. Her husband will be home soon; why don't the protagonists stay for supper? While this is going on, the protagonists can hear a baby crying, somewhere in the house, but Zenna doesn't seem to be worried about it. She doesn't go to comfort the child, and claims that there's nothing wrong. The quickest way to destroy this delusion is to go to the baby, for there's nothing in the crib at all, except a battered and slimy wire coat hanger. **Stability** check at difficulty 6, as Zenna's delusion is the core which holds the group together. If the characters manage to destroy her and at least two other key cultists, then the cult's ceremony is disrupted.

If the protagonists manage to shatter enough of these delusions, then the pain illusions fade. The protagonists find themselves returned to the crypt. The cult members are crushed, writhing in agony; the pain that they deferred has redoubled upon them, and their minds have broken.

Mordiggan then manifests. If the altar is still present then he grows from it, expanding its form and taking its essence into his own, corrupt frame. If not, then the murals on the wall melt and change, at first as if the skeletal

forms of Death are breaking free, and then as though the whole wall is one solid mass of rotten, pallid flesh, rushing forward to engulf everything in its path. If the action is not taking place in the crypt then Mordiggan possesses a cultist or an item (eg. the electro-therapeutic device), adding the bodies of the slain to this core. **Stability** check at difficulty 7 (including the additional pool for encountering Mordiggan), with an additional **Sanity** pool loss of 2 points as the protagonists are in the presence of one of the greater Mythos entities.

The few candles that the cult had lit will be extinguished; if the protagonists did not bring light sources of their own, then the room goes dark. Mordiggan starts taking his vengeance, destroying each person in the room, one by one. There is only one exit from the crypt; if the protagonists want to escape, they'll need to be quick.

Treat it as a **Fleeing** test, difficulty 6, that may be attempted multiple times. A successful check means that the protagonist managed to put someone else, perhaps a cultist or another protagonist, in Mordiggan's path, thus avoiding the doom that would otherwise have been their lot. Whoever is attacked by Mordiggan, whether cultist or character, dies instantly; **Scuffling** is no defence, though the Keeper may choose to allow a contested **Scuffling** roll, with success meaning that the protagonist flung someone else in harm's way. Once this is dealt with, the protagonists then have to get out, but the entrance is so small that only one person at a time can get away. **Athletics** difficulty 6 means that the character managed to get out, but only one character can be successful per round.

All this assumes that the ceremony was interrupted, which means that Mordiggan will just kill the cultists, and anyone in the same room as the cultists. If this was not done, then as soon as the cult is dealt with Mordiggan emerges from the crypt and begins slaughtering everyone in the Hospital, growing ever larger with each death until the entity towers over the terrain. The ravens fly overhead, and when the slaughter reaches its peak they dive down upon the God-entity, snatching Him up as small gobbets of dead flesh in their claws, before flying away. The devastation will be passed off as a German attack, possibly an aerial bombardment or shelling. There will be nothing left; all buildings will have been smashed flat, and not a soul escapes alive.

This event may trigger Anagorisis in characters with the following **Drives**: **Arrogance, Curiosity, Ennui.**

Pre-Generated Characters

Should the Keeper and players prefer, they can create their own characters for this scenario.

The pre-generated characters have been assigned skills assuming a six-player group; if this should not be the case, the Keeper might consider allowing skill swapping, if, in the Keeper's judgement, the group lacks useful skills (eg. **Military Talk**) or has too much of the same kind of skills.

Three of the pre-gens are **Posted** while three are **Injured**.

As an alternative, the Keeper might like to use this scenario as a springboard for other games set in the Great War. In those circumstances this scenario could be considered the start of a longer-running campaign game. Possible story ideas for a game of this type include:

- The cult encountered in this scenario spread further before being destroyed. The characters have to track the satellite cults in the other hospitals down and deal with them as well.

- The influence of Mordiggan is spreading. There are rumours of strange, savage creatures that hide in the shell craters of No-Man's Land, things that feed on human flesh. The characters discover that these creatures were once soldiers who have turned to cannibalism, and who have been converted by Death's influence into something beyond death itself.

- There's talk in the trenches of a new kind of medicine, a drug that is very difficult to get hold of. Those who take it claim that it eases their pain, and according to rumour some of those who do fall asleep and never wake up. These dreamers, who have been feasting on pain, are creating their own reality in the Dreamlands, escaping the War, but in the process they're allowing Mordiggan a foothold in the waking world, effectively sacrificing their fellow soldiers in exchange for safe haven in dreams. Where is this drug coming from? Is it somehow connected with the sleeping sickness that's engulfing the world, claiming the lives of millions? Will Mordiggan stretch out the war for years or decades to come, engulfing the world in bloody ruin?

If the Keeper chooses to extend these ideas into a longer campaign with the players creating their own characters then the pre-gens given here could be used as replacements, as needed.

Paul Remi

Belgian Boy Scout and military runner (treat as **Posted**).

Drive: Curiosity

Occupational Skills: Assess Honesty 2, Bargain 2, Credit Rating 2, Disguise 1, Evidence Collection 2, Languages 2, Military Talk 2, Oral History 2, Photography 1, Reassurance 3, Shadowing 3

General Skills: Art 3, Fleeing 8, Filch 2, History 4, Health 8, Locksmith 2, Occult 1, Sanity 7, Sense Trouble 4, Stability 7, Streetwise 5, Stealth 4, Theology 2

Until the War broke out, your greatest ambition was to be a newspaper reporter. Your parents were of the petit bourgeois, and strict Catholics. You were the third brother; the eldest, Georges, was to follow in your father's footsteps and join the family firm, while Prosper, the second son, was to be a soldier. There was not enough money in the family for you to have much ambition, but your mother intended you for the priesthood. Your daily routine as a news vendor gave you some independence, and just enough money of your own to make you think there could be more to life. You had plans, and were about to leave home to make your fortune when the Germans invaded.

Now your family is dead, except for your mother and your brother Georges, but he was conscripted into the army and you haven't seen him in months. Your father and Prosper were both shot early on for resisting the occupation forces. You do what you can for your country and your family, and work as a volunteer courier for the army. You have two medals to your credit for meritorious service, despite being only fourteen, and are not short of courage.

Recently you've begun to wonder whether there isn't something badly wrong at Military Hospital Number Five. One of your best friends, Paul LaFarge, was sent there during the last Push, and while there was no reason to think his wounds were that serious, he died very suddenly. You think it might be a good idea to investigate this further; partly to avenge Paul, but partly also to understand what's going on at the hospital.

Francis Patterson

Doctor, temporary Captain RAMC **Posted**

Drive: Duty

Occupational Skills: Accounting 1, Assess Honesty 2, Biology 3, Credit Rating 4, First Aid 3, Forensics 1, Medicine 5, Languages 5, Pharmacy 3, Reassurance 1

General Skills: Athletics 2, Art History 4, Architecture 3, Bureaucracy 2, Fleeing 6, History 3, Health 9, Drive 5, Occult 1, Preparedness 2, Psychoanalysis 5, Sanity 6, Stability 7, Sense Trouble 2, Stealth 4, Scuffling 2

Your father was a colonial administrator who rose

very high in the ranks in India, eventually becoming aide-de-camp to the Viceroy. You spent your boyhood years in India, and still have an affection for the place and its colourful history. As the only son, your parents wanted the best for you, and put you through medical school with the idea that you'd become a world famous surgeon.

You fell in with this idea as you have all their other ideas for you. It's not that you lack a will of your own, but you feel it's very important that you justify the faith that they have in you, to be the very best. Your war service is part of that overriding ambition, to show them that you really are as good as they think you are. You'd never let them down.

You have one secret that you've been hiding from them. On your last leave, you fell in love with a young girl from a very disadvantaged family. You had a whirlwind romance, but it all ended with a shock when she announced she was pregnant. Now you don't know what to do; you can't marry her, your parents would be devastated, but there's a child to consider. She's been writing very nasty letters, demanding money for her silence. The baby must be due any day; you don't know what will happen after it's born.

Evelyn Ryce
Nurse **Posted**

Drive: Follower

Occupational Skills: Assess Honesty 3, Biology 2, Bureaucracy 3, Credit Rating 2, Flattery 1, First Aid 4, Medicine 1, Pharmacy 4, Reassurance 2

General Skills: Athletics 3, Art History 2, Fleeing 6, Health 10, Locksmith 1, Languages 3, Military Talk 2, Occult 1, Oral History 4, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 1, Stealth 3, Sense Trouble 4, Sanity 6, Stability 8, Theology 4

You come from a very Catholic family. Your entire life has been dominated by the Church, and until now you have been very devout. It has been generally accepted, from a very early age, that one day you'd become a bride of Christ and enter the nunnery, possibly thereafter to carry the Word of God to the darkest corners of the earth.

The war changed all that. The first few months were much as you expected; hard, but ultimately your faith prevailed. However like many others you expected the war to be over quickly, and when it did not end, you began to wonder what God's plan was. When the devastation continued, and broken bodies came your way on a very regular basis, your faith was tested. Your first flamethrower victim was the worst; a poor shrivelled thing, like some kind of monkey, barely alive. You kept him going for two days, and then he expired; all the while you wondered what you were doing, trying to save the life of a man whose life, for all intents and purposes, was over.

Now you've taken to drink on the quiet. You don't think you have a life outside the War. You keep tending the wounded because you can't imagine what life would be like if you stopped; secretly, you wonder whether, if the war ended, you wouldn't just go mad.

Sergeant Terry Randall
Soldier **Injured**

Drive: Arrogance

Occupational Skills: Athletics 2, Conceal 1, Credit Rating 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Intimidate 4, Outdoorsman 1, Scuffling 5, Stealth 1

General Skills: Fleeing 6, Filch 1, History 2, Health 10, Languages 1, Military Talk 10, Preparedness 8, Sanity 8, Stability 9, Sense Trouble 8, Shadowing 4

You are the very best soldier in the Regiment. Everything about you, from the polish on your boots to the edge on your bayonet, shows it. You are a killer of men, and have several medals to prove it. You think you have what it takes to go to the very top; Colonel, one day.

It wasn't always thus. You started as a raw private; before that, you were an unemployed navvy on the Liverpool docks. Your outspoken Union activities got you the sack. Typical, really; you gave the best of yourself to help your fellow working man, and when push came to shove they made sure they kept their cushy jobs while you lost yours. Well, things have changed since then. You've lost a lot of your naivety. You don't care much about the Union or your fellow man. If they weren't all scum, they'd have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, same as you did.

That said, there's nothing on this earth that you'd back away from. You have guts and the will to win, and that's why you're the best. Backing down from a fight isn't in your nature. You'd sooner die than surrender.

Hauptmann Ranulf Keppel
German Soldier **Injured**

Drive: Ennui

Occupational Skills: Astronomy 1, Credit Rating 2, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 3, Mechanical Repair 1, Sense Trouble 4, Pilot 2

General Skills: Architecture 1, Assess Honesty 3, Athletics 5, Bargain 4, Conceal 5, Disguise 3, Flattery 4, Filch 1, Health 9, Languages 2, Locksmith 1, Military Talk 1, Reassurance 1, Sanity 7, Stability 8, Stealth 7

You never wanted any of this. Before the War you worked as a maitre 'd on the Hamburg Line, from New York to South America. You picked up good English (albeit with an American accent) and hoped for promotion. Or perhaps you would emigrate to America; you had cousins there, and with your skills picking up a job would be easy.

Fate had other plans for you. When the War broke out, you considered it your patriotic duty to return to the Fatherland and volunteer. Soon afterward you were posted to the *Luftstreitkräfte,* on account

of your (almost nonexistent) mechanical expertise; such is the logic of the military. You trained as a pilot but ended up as an observer on a two-seater. Your combat history has been one long series of disasters, and you've become convinced (having seen several burning aircraft) that you'll die in a flamer, screaming in agony as your flying coffin spirals to the ground. Oddly, you're beginning to find the prospect comforting. At least you know how it will end.

This latest development is the final straw. In the last attack, you got shot down and found yourself on the wrong side of the Lines. Thankfully your uniform was so covered in mud and oil that it didn't immediately give you away, and your English is good enough to pass muster. You've stolen some kit (a cap, a coat) and pretended to be a Canadian volunteer. The problem is, if anyone suspects your true allegiance, you're likely to be shot as a spy. The best plan you've come up with is to lie low and claim ignorance. Maybe you'll make it to New York yet, but you'll have to be clever about it. Even as a fake Canadian, you can't just walk away; desertion is a death sentence on this side of the Line as well as your own.

Private Benjamin Morel

Soldier **Injured**

Drive: In the Blood

Occupational Skills: Athletics 1, Credit Rating 2, Firearms 2, First Aid 3, Intimidation 1, Medicine 1, Outdoorsman 4, Reassurance 4, Weapons 2

General Skills: Art 1, Fleeing 8, Health 10, Languages 1, Military Talk 6, Oral History 4, Occult 3, Sanity 6, Stability 7, Sense Trouble 8, Shadowing 8

Your mother was French, and you spent many summers in the South of France with your cousins and uncles. You enjoy the quiet, simple rural life, and like nothing better than to laze around in the sun on a summer's day.

Soldiering was never your ambition, but when the War broke out it seemed as though everyone was joining up. All your older brothers had already volunteered by 1916, while you were still in school, and when you finally lied about your age and joined up it was less out of conviction than a desire not to be left out.

Ever since your twelfth birthday you've had what could best be described as visions. They're never very clear, but your mother's side of the family allegedly had the second sight; perhaps you too can see ghosts, as your grandfather supposedly can. If so, it's a very frightening gift, particularly now when half the world seems intent on killing the other half. You wonder whether you haven't made a very big mistake in joining up, but it's too late now to change your mind.

You keep a war diary and sketches of your fellow soldiers and their battles. You think one day you might make something of this talent, perhaps even become an artist. That way you could try to make sense of your dreams and visions, perhaps even control them. Right now, they're more of a burden than a help to you, and at night, in your dreams, you can't escape them, much as you wish you could.

Playtest Issues

During testing, one issue came up which Keepers should be aware of: it may not be easy to get the group to function as a team, in part because of the natural split between Injured and Posted. The Hate scene was scripted with this problem in mind. This may want some gentle Keeper nudging, but it's worth bearing in mind that the group does not have to work as a team. In a long-running campaign, of course, teamwork is essential, but a one-shot can be more fluid. An alternative would be to create different characters, possibly making all the wounded members of the same regiment so at least the Injured characters will have a predefined reason to work together. One playtest group redefined the characters and made them all Canadians injured during the Battle of Arras, which worked well for them.

Bear in mind if your group forgo the pregens then either someone needs to have the Architecture skill or the clues marked Architecture should be switched to Evidence Collection. This may mean that Evidence Collection is used in combination with other abilities, eg. Languages (Latin) to translate VIXANN (as seen in *"Meeting with a Senior Cult Member"*).

The heavy Stability losses towards the end of the scenario were also commented on. In part this is addressed in the Purist or Pulp? sidebar. The Keeper should feel free to downplay the Stability losses in later scenes, if necessary.

Scenario length is designed for one evening's play. If all the players are Injured this may foreshorten the game, as it may skip some of the Posted scenes.

Finally, several playtesters found themselves more in sympathy with the cultists than the hospital. Good! That can only make the game more interesting. If the players are desperately brainstorming for a means by which they can save the 'bad' guys – who are just the same as the 'good' guys really – then you know the game is going well.

Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal and *bon chance mes amis!* I hope your group enjoys *Not So Quiet*.

The Black Drop

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Notes on The Black Drop

By Jason Morningstar

My interest in the Kerguelen islands goes back a long way – the place is a curious geological footnote, remote and deeply strange. The more I looked into it, the stranger it got. My first inclination was to set an adventure during the 1874 transit of Venus, for which the Kerguelens proved an ideal viewing location. The transit is a fairly rare event, and in an age of exploding scientific progress and unfettered nationalism, it became a competition. Viewing stations were established all over the globe –Yokohama, Wellington, all over Australia, Cairo, Campbell island (another great weird location), Noumea, as well as Persia, India and Hawaii. Germany, Britain, France, the Netherlands and – late to the party – the United States all got into the game. Five scientific stations were established in the Kerguelen archipelago, representing Germany, Britain and the United States.

The German station was, of course, in Betsy cove. It was in researching the transit of Venus that I first came across that ominous description of a then-unexplained astronomical phemonenon, the black drop.

The history is just dripping with craziness. Much of that got put into handouts, at least in outline form. The Germans, in 1874, built their station more or less atop a whaler's graveyard:

"As we neared the shore we were not a little surprised to see what appeared at first like a graveyard surrounding the buildings of the astronomers The spot was most carefully scrutinized by our telescopes and still no other satisfactory explanation could be suggested of what we saw It was difficult to believe that the Germans had settled down for their half year's work on the Island of Desolation in the midst of a crowd of gravestones, but so it was." – Stephen Joseph Perry, 1874

What's not to love about that? The brutal history of whaling in the region is a horror all its own, one I briefly allude to in the adventure.

I was all set to write a 19th century adventure with rival scientific expeditions when I stumbled across another interesting Kerguelen footnote – the archipelago was also a port of call for the German commerce raider Atlantis during the second world war. They even buried a crewman in what is now Port-Aux-Francais, the southern-most grave of any German sailor. My conspiratorial mind started threading pieces together, wondering if the Germans actually had other reasons for visiting in 1940, found a hook for a 1930's adventure. The result is The Black Drop.

Graham Walmsley wisely counseled me not to get too specific with my monster.

It isn't named or placed in a Lovecraftian taxonomy; you can make it whatever you want. It's a little scarier that way, I think, and much easier to integrate into an ongoing campaign (although the adventure itself isn't very friendly to that).

I included a set of characters with The Black Drop, because it is a stand-alone (and likely terminal) adventure, and because it is set in an unusual place. I imagined that it might be hard to come up with a random guy who had a compelling reason to visit the archipelago on a moment's notice.

And I had the freedom to juice them up a little to my own tastes, adding a healthy smear of inter-party conflict and nationalistic antagonism to keep things interesting and off-kilter. I hope players enjoy them – some of the playtesters expressed their reservations, and in my own playtests I watched people selectively ignore elements that would cause inter-party friction occasionally, To each his own.

If you wanted to expand The Black Drop into a sprawling, multi-generational epic, you could divide it into three parts. The first would be the age of exploration and whaling, the second would be the scientific expeditions of 1874, and the third has already been written. Since the earliest encounters with the God of the Black Stone (perhaps Yves-Joseph de Kerguelen-Trémarec in 1772) would be poorly documented anyway, I leave them to your imagination.

What follows are some notes to bring that second part to life.

The British vessel HMS Challenger (G. S. Nares, master) was first on the scene, putting a building party ashore in January 1874. Their ambitious plan included three observation stations in the Kerguelens, at the appropriately named Observatory bay, Thumb peak (Sommerville Goodridge in command), and Supply bay (Cyril Corbet). Observatory bay was their main camp, and all three were in place by the end of January. Challenger was eventually joined by HMS Supply and

HMS Volage, giving Britain a formidable naval presence in the region. For much of the summer, Challenger performed oceanographic and scientific research in Kerguelen waters, ranging far and wide.

The station at Observatory Bay was overseen by the Reverend S. J.

Perry. The Reverend A. E. Eaton, a prominent naturalist, accompanied him.

They arrived on Volage in November.

Meanwhile, the Americans were establishing a camp and research station at Molloy point (far to the south of Betsy cove), arriving on 7 September. A US Navy expedition, its chief was Captain G. P. Ryan.

Captain Redmond was the chief astronomer. The USS Swatara is the vessel that brought them and retrieved them.

The German transit of Venus expedition was landed on 26 October by the war-frigate Gazelle at Betsy cove, near the remnants of the Prussian camp from 1844 and Drygalski's German Antarctic Expedition base camp.

The expedition was under the overall command of the Gazelle's master, the extremely capable Baron Georg Gustav Freiherr von Schleintz. Dr.

Ladislaus Wienek was the chief astronomer. Theodor Studer made the first reconnaissance into the interior of the Courbet peninsula, in the direction of the unholy temple, perhaps along a path well-trod by previous Germans in the Black Drop Society.

The American sealer Roswell King, mastered by Captain Fuller, haunted Kerguelen waters at this time as well, visiting all the camps and trading when the opportunity arose.

To whip these facts into an adventure, remember that the transit aligns the stars in a way that awakens the God of the Black Stone. For the first time ever, the archipelago is awash with people tramping about, and the God will speak to some of them. Perhaps an Anglo-American team penetrates the Courbet peninsula to spy on the Germans – who, after all, have been visiting Betsy cove periodically for a long time. Perhaps a crew member of the Roswell King is put ashore, raving, having seen things no man should see. Perhaps the arrogant Germans refuse to sacrifice themselves and choose to sacrifice American scientists instead…

The Black Drop

"For some things, thirty years is but a heartbeat."

Front matter

Introduction

Something slowly gathers strength beneath the frozen basalt of the remote Kerguelen archipelago - a monstrous thing once worshipped and then betrayed, a terrible god from the antediluvian past. It's time has come again, and mysterious forces gather. Will they usher in its rebirth - or put an end to it forever?

The Black Drop is an adventure for Trail of Cthulhu. It takes place in the Kerguelen Islands. Although it could swing toward the Pulp end of things, there's plenty of windswept nihilism and reliably cosmic horror for any Purist. Adjusted by the Keeper to taste, it will work well for either style.

Abilities necessary for the revelation of various clues should be played flexibly - multiple approaches will work, depending on the situation. Consider those offered as suggestions and adapt as necessary.

Disclaimer

Much of the information presented in this adventure is true. The history is factual as far as fact will carry in such a remote place. The names of real people, Kerguelen notables, are used extensively. As far as I know, the mid-century colonists and explorers who left their mark on the archipelago were good people, not evil thralls to a soul-blasting dead God.

The Hook

The adventure begins with the French freighter Austral steaming into Port Couvreux, the only inhabited point in the remote Kerguelen archipelago. It's a somber occasion - the only settlement in the Kerguelens, a sheep station, is being abandoned.

Three families are packing up and returning to France, their commercial enterprise an utter failure. Meanwhile, further down the coast, a German expedition of unknown means and purpose has arrived. The Investigators may have their own reasons for visiting this far corner of the world…

The Horrible Truth

Sated with blood by the ancient Lemurians, the God of the Black Stone was a force of terror and evil in the distant past. It took the sinking of an entire continent to silence it, and even that has proven only temporary. In a remote corner of the most inaccessible islands on Earth, in the bergschrund of a massive glacier amid inky monoliths of volcanic rock, the ruins of the last Lemurian temple still reach skyward. And beneath it, the weakened God stirs.

The Kerguelen archipelago is all that remains above the surface of the ancient continent of Lemuria. A once-mighty civilization, adept at the strange and potent manipulation of resonant crystal, was destroyed in prehistoric times, and the foul thing they worshipped was beaten into a deep torpor. In the Kerguelens, few traces remain - bits of worked crystal and a black basalt temple tucked away in a remote and mountainous corner. The Keeper is, of course, free to revise ancient history to suit her own interests and the campaign's needs.

The arrival of men, its former slaves, awoke it. Something about the death energy released in slaughter - the rapacious killing of hundreds of thousands of fur and elephant seals over the last hundred years - has aroused and sustained it. The power of the God of the Black Stone grows. It is still feeble, but every thirty years it reaches out to the weak-minded and ambitious and makes them terrible promises. And every thirty years it is stopped by means of a repellent sacrifice that good men make in the name of humanity.

The last time was in 1903, and the rising of the God of the Black Stone is overdue.

The Black Drop Society is a group of German academics and adventurers who, generation after generation, return to the hideous temple on the slope of Mt. Lyall to keep the God of the Black Stone quiescent. To do so requires a dreadful sacrifice - death and madness for all but one of their number. The sole survivor returns to organize the next expedition, thirty years hence. The Black Drop Society's most recent incarnation is already in the Kerguelens, at anchor in their vessel, the Tenerife, off Betsy Cove.

The God of the Black Stone has not been idle - although weakened, it has spent the last thirty years slowly gaining strength and reaching out to receptive proxies. Mssr. and Mlle. De la Rue, noted geologists and

explorers of the archipelago, became worshippers many years ago. Two of the three families that live in the Kerguelens have also become cultists, and they are eager to free their god and usher in a terrible new age.

These two forces - the Germans on one hand and the cultists on the other - have diametrically opposed goals that, to the Investigators, will not be immediately clear. For the God of of the Black Stone to be stopped, they will need to help the Black Drop Society - but can they be trusted? And when asked to lay down their own lives for the sake of humanity, do they have the courage to follow through?

The Spine

The characters must:

- Discover the cult and the God of the Black Stone and escape or destroy them. The De La Rue's and their allies in the Kerguelens have nothing to lose, and will destroy anything that stands between them and the release of the God of the Black Stone at the appointed hour.
- Learn about the German expedition and its purpose, and either help them or stop them. The Germans are not a friendly or appealing group, consisting of an SS officer and men who know they are marked for certain, horrific death.
- Put the God of the Black Stone down for another 30 years, or die trying. The crux of the adventure is the implicit moral choice - the Germans cannot succeed in containing the God of the Black Stone alone, but aiding them (or taking their place entirely) guarantees madness and death.

The Black Drop as a One-Shot

The Black Drop can be run as a stand-alone adventure. In this mode, use the pre-generated characters to fill out the ranks of Investigators. They will be stumbling blindly into a very dangerous situation. As an alternative in pulp mode, the Keeper might choose to make a two-fisted band of passengers who are explicitly tracking down the fabled Black Drop Society, with a goal of punching some Nazi teeth in. Regardless, as Keeper you will have to ruthlessly edit and compress events if you are playing from start to finish in four hours. Keep things tight, skip the flashbacks, move clues where necessary, and fast-track the action as much as is practical and fun. For example, having the Germans arrive in Port Couvreux during the Investigator's first day there works well.

The Black Drop as Part of a Campaign

Characters from an ongoing campaign can easily be inserted into this adventure. They may be filling any of the roles detailed below, or they may be arriving as passengers with some vague idea that something foul is going on. In either case, the Keeper is encouraged to plant the seeds in earlier investigations.

Perhaps they are sent by a mentor or well-placed friend who is concerned about what the Germans are up to (See "Keeping Tabs on the Nazis" below).

Maybe their own esoteric research has hinted at strange things suppressed in Yves-Joseph de Kerguelen-Trémarec's official accounts.

Perhaps a curious Tamil artifact has turned up that clearly demonstrates a connection to Kumari Kandam, a mythical land "far to the south" ruled long ago by the Pandiyan kings before being drowned beneath the ocean, complete with an ancient prophecy that "The Dark God of Elumunpalai Natu" would return soon after the 1874 transit of Venus. Could it be Lemuria? Could it be dread Cthulhu? Who could resist finding out?

Anyone with reasons to be concerned about German intentions - Investigators with ties to government, actual spies, people who have tangled with the Ahnenerbe in the past - should be making the journey at least in part to keep an eye on the Tenerife and her mysterious crew. Anyone on the Austral's passenger roster could be a French agent, and any Investigator could be asked to tag along with this goal in mind by interested parties. The Tenerife's destination is perfectly well known, but her true purpose is definitely not. She was chartered by a sinister Teutonic organization known as die Schwarzen Tropfen Gesellschaft - the Black Drop Society.

Whatever their motivation, this adventure has a good chance of being the Investigator's last. This is not hyperbole, so understand the implications before sending Investigators from a pre-existing campaign.

Reasons to be Aboard the Austral

The pre-generated characters provided all have reasons to visit the Kerguelens; here are suggestions for others.

Archaeologist, Scientist, Occultist

A sketch, in the mad diaries of French Sanskrit scholar Louis Jacolliot, of the lost right half of Admiral Piri Reis' map of the world. You saw it for less than a minute, but it clearly showed a continent in the Indian ocean - Terra Australis Incognita. The southern-most lobe was shaped exactly like the Kerguelen Islands, and showed Mount Ross as an active volcano. The last eruption of Mount Ross occurred 26,000 years ago. Could the Kerguelens be the last vestige of the fabled Lemuria? There's only one way to find out.

Police Detective, Private Investigator

Hundreds of whale- and seal-hunters perished on or near the Kerguelens, and many are buried on her untamed shores. For people who lost an ancestor, sending a respectable man into the southern ocean to find the grave, to note its location, and to repair its marker is a matter of family pride and, in some cases, closure. The gorgeous lady with the steamer ticket for Cape Town standing in your office thinks you are that respectable man for her grandfather's grave, in a place called Betsy Cove.

Alienist, Doctor, Nurse

The French government needs a medical professional on short notice, and apparently you are it. They are concerned about public health in the colonies, even those with a population you can count on one hand. A thorough inspection (and possibly disinfection) of those departing the Kerguelens is required, and their health needs attended to after years in isolation. The magistrate who hires you smiles ruefully. «Bring a dental kit,» he says.

Archaeologist, Author

Rumor has it the Austral will be the last boat to visit the Kerguelens for years. You've got one chance to explore the interior of Le Grande Terre, the Kerguelen's largest island. The notion of testing yourself in one of the harshest and most isolated environments on the planet, as well as advancing scientific understanding of this remote land, is very attractive - and the check from New Horizons magazine seals the deal. The chance to discover new features and fill in blank spots on the map - possibly named after yourself - is irresistable.

Hobo

What you know about ships could fit on the end of a marlin spike, but what you know about steady meals could fill the hull of this dodgy old scow. When they came looking for someone who could do heavy work in bad weather a million miles from home, you raised your inebriated hand. Now you've learned that they'll be dumping you on some God-forsaken shore so you can spend two weeks boarding up houses and draining the oil from machinery. At least the food will be stready and the company interesting.

Military

«International Liaison», they said, and you knew it was punishment for what you'd done. Remanded to the French. The pompous official overseeing the evacuation of the Port Couvreux colonists felt the need for an armed escort - perhaps he is afraid of penguins. Being detached for a tedious job like this may not be plum duty, but the service did promise that you'd see new places, didn't it? Time to «extend a firm hand of friendship to your Gallic brothers-in-arms» and assess Kerguelen anchorages for commerce raiders during the coming war. Two were pointed out to you for specific reconaissance - Port Couvreux and Betsy Cove.

Journalist

It's sort of a sad story, really - the dying gasp of France's colonial ambition in the southern ocean - but there's definitely a strong human interest angle. What brought these people to the Kerguelens? And what forced them out - the isolation, the weather, each other? What will they do next? What is it that they are leaving behind on the Island of Desolation, and what secrets have they buried here among the skuas and elephant seals? That's the story you told, anyway, and it earned you a ticket and a per diem. Better dig up *something* interesting…

Antiquarian, Dilettante

Everyone who visited the Kerguelens, starting in 1772, left evidence of their passing. Sealed bottles with signed documents and charts, territorial claims and personal keepsakes will all fetch a good price at auction. A single copy of Captain James Cook's signature alone will pay for this junket. And more .. curious … items rumored to litter the old camps might fetch considerably more from motivated buyers with discrete tastes. A particularly repellent Tamil gentleman is bankrolling your little junket, and he wants, of all things, geological specimens. «Bits of crystal», he told you, «nothing but crystal.»

Scientist, Professor

For astronomers, the opportunity to examine the sites of the 1874 transit of Venus observations to correct for geodetic errors is impossible to resist, and the rare occultation of Regulus by the planet Venus will be clear in the southern sky - an added bonus. For biologists, an environment almost untouched by the hand of man may offer insights into everything from wind-borne pollination to the origins of life. For geologists and chemists, the Kerguelens are a laboratory of geophysical and organic processes rarely seen elsewhere in the world. For you, a dabbler in all these disciplines and more, this trip is a chance for a few weeks peace, as previous indescretons die down at home.

At Sea

The Austral may be steaming from Ille de Reunion, Cape Town, or even Australia - wherever the Investigators are likely to join her. The Kerguelens are close to nothing and surrounded by endless miles of dangerous ocean. There's plenty of time to get to know everyone on board, and perhaps to get a bad feeling about the de la Rues. The voyage to Port Couvreux will take eight days. If the Keeper can work up a suitable sense of dread, so much the better, but there's no reason to drag the trip out.

The Austral

The Austral is a well-appointed French-flagged motor-sailer. With a crew of six and plentiful space for cargo and passengers, her current task is to load the Port Couvreux colonists' possessions and bring them home. Any of her passengers or crew, save the de la Rues, can be player characters. This is the last regular voyage to the Kerguelens. Once the Austral departs, the islands will be devoid of human inhabitants. Whaling and seal-hunting have long since become unprofitable, and the place is so remote that no one will visit by chance. If you have business in the Kerguelens, this is your final opportunity.

French geologist Edgar de la Rue and his wife and assistant Andrée are passengers aboard the Austral, the only ones other than prospective Investigators. They plan to explore the interior of the main island, fossil-hunting for 14 million year old Auraucariaceae amid the lignite strata of ancient volcanic flows. They also plan to unleash the God of the Black Stone from his temple-prison, dying in ecstasy beneath his unknowable visage as he blots out the southern sky. He made himself known to them many years ago, on a previous expedition, and they have been his servants in the greater world ever since. They have allies waiting for them in Port Couvreux.

On the Bridge

Deutsch Funkverkehr

Somewhere in the Indian Ocean, the Austral begins picking up very strong German shortwave radio traffic. The Austral's Master, Louis Radalle, will pick up the first signals, and remark on them at breakfast. Radalle will ask for help, having no German himself and being a curious man.

[Core Clue] There is a German vessel heading for the Kerguelens.

Any German speaker, or anyone spending a Languages point to reveal that they speak German, or in a pinch a crewman can easily determine that the transmissions are coming from a vessel called the Tenerife, bound for the Kerguelen Islands.

A one-point Languages spend will further reveal that the Tenerife is sending messages to loved ones back in Germany via shortwave - farewell messages. If the Investigators are not already acquainted through their own backstories, there is also fleeting mention of a «Black Drop Society».

A further one-point Occult spend can trigger a flashback (See flashback #1: «The Black Drop Society») for an appropriate character - someone who has been to Berlin.

A Keeper interested in Ahnenerbe complications down the road can also add some curious coded transmissions, which a one-point Cryptography spend will reveal to be impenetrable but intriguing *Funkschlüssel M* military code machine traffic - curious for what claims to be a small, privately-owned fishing boat in the southern Indian ocean.

In the Salon

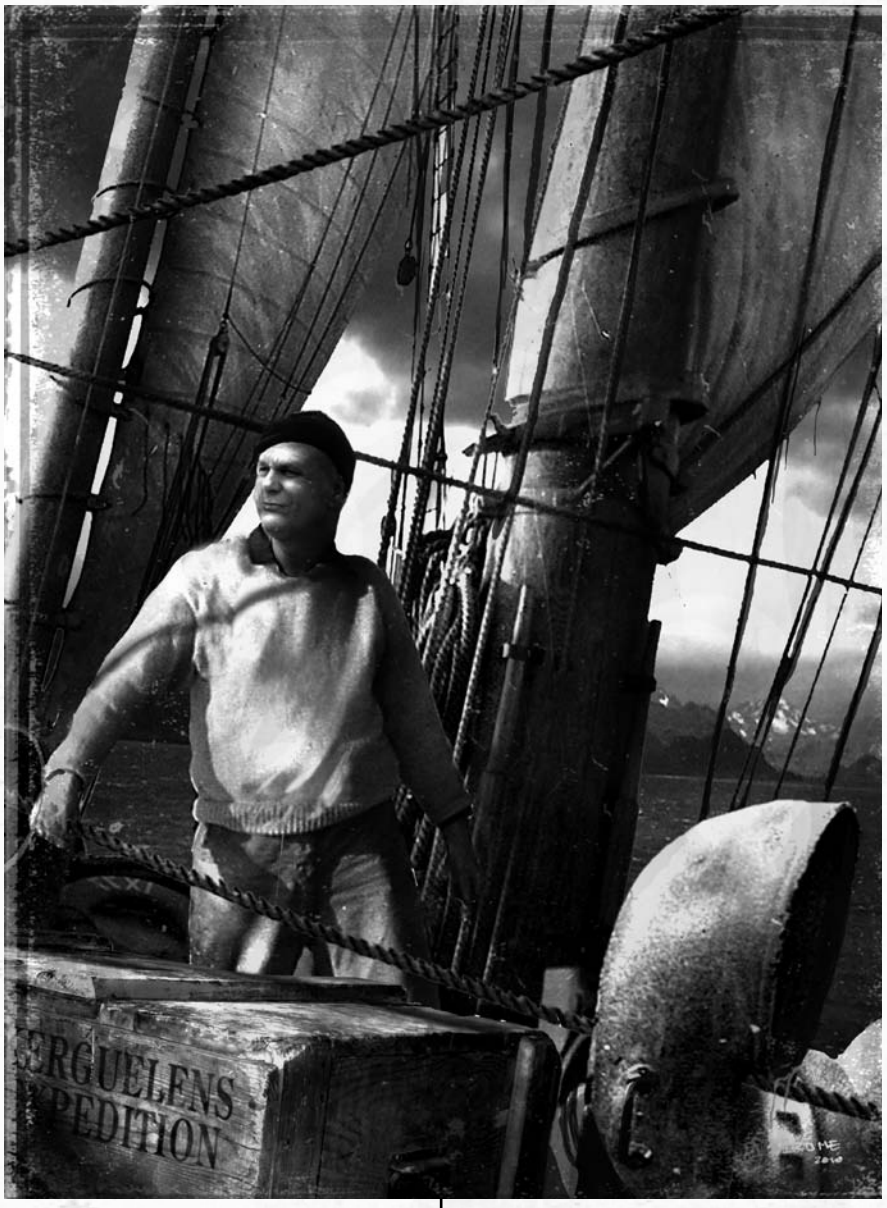
The Curious de la Rues

Edgar and Andrée de la Rue are charming and outspoken companions, eager to argue passionately about subjects ranging from Russian politics to the Burgess shale. They are en route to conclude their decade-long geological survey of the Kerguelens. They appear brilliant and cheerful. Play Edgar as a sort of rough Gallic boffin, equal parts wooly explorer and bespectacled bookworm. Andrée should be played as ferociously outgoing and flirtatious, and a capable match to her husband in intelligence and enthusiasm.

Anyone interested in the de la Rue's plans will get a complete overview from Edgar.

Geology or Assess Honesty will reveal flaws in his logic. If de la Rue were «fossil-hunting for 14 million year old Auraucariaceae amid the lignite strata of ancient volcanic flows around Mt. Lyall» as he claims, surely he would have equipped his expedition with the tools for fine work - brushes, trowels, and the like. The fact that he didn't is telling. Outdoorsman will indicate that they are woefully under-equipped. The de la Rue expedition is a complete sham.

Andrée seems to have a fairly liberal conception of marriage vows and will playfully try to seduce an Investigator. Choose the least likely candidate and make Andrée very attractive and persistent. To the target of her extra-marital affections, Andrée de la Rue has an unsettling, frank gaze, a sort of fervor about her work one rarely sees outside a monastery. An Investigator using the Occult ability will make it clear that Andrée is a fanatic, probably a cultist. Psychoanalysis will reveal that she is clearly demented, with a sexual mania and some underlying sociopathic disorder. Her erstwhile lover will get the impression that she's



straining at an invisible leash, eager to be set free in the Kerguelens. A one-point Flattery or Reassurance spend will coax a bit more out of her - Andrée is about to embark on «a new chapter in her life» and the upcoming expedition will allow her to leave an indelible mark on the world. This spend will inevitably lead to a sexual opportunity as well, in her love nest in the hold.

Anyone poking around too deeply into the de la Rue's scientific affairs will be angrily dismissed as an ignorant troublemaker, but the couple will maintain their pleasant demeanor in public. The de la Rue's are intended as cultists, but there's nothing wrong with making them a red herring if that seems more natural, based on their early interactions with the Investigators. They can show up as innocent dupes, or be ritually slaughtered and left as a message, or simply vanish forever.

The Library

The Austral has a well-used one-shelf library equally divided between lurid French dime novels and academic books on the southern ocean. Library Use nets the Investigators some information on their destination. Give the Investigators handout #1 (Kidder's Natural History).

A one-point Library Use or History spend will trigger a flashback (See flashback #2: «The Curious History of the Kerguelen Archipelago») as well as the document of the same name (handout #2). A further one-point History spend will reveal additional notes of particular interest, to be discovered during the flashback. Give the Investigators handout #3 («Some Notes on maritime Oddities in the Kerguelens»)

The library also has a heavily-annotated collection of Louis Jacolliot's books - *La Genèse de l'Humanité. Fétichisme, polythéisme, monothéisme*; *Histoire des Vierges. Les Peuples et les continents disparus*; and *Le Spiritisme dans le monde, L'initiation et les sciences occultes dans l'Inde et chez tous les peuples de l'antiquité*. Poring over this last («Occult science in India and among the ancients, with an account of their mystic initiations, and the history of spiritism»), combined with feverish annotations by an unknown hand in French, is worth 1 point in Cthulhu Mythos. It contains Jacoillot's ramblings about the lost continent of Lemuria, its terrifying occupants, and the apocalyptic fate that befell them.

In the Hold

The hold contains crate after unlabeled crate of explosives and detonator cord. While this is not entirely out of place for a geological expedition, the sheer quantity is unnerving. The de la Rue's could knock down the Empire State building with the quantity of ordnance they have brought along. Anyone who wants to steal some of these explosives

can easily do so - in fact, the Keeper should encourage it.

Andrée has fashioned a cramped love nest amid the explosives, adding a frisson of danger to her amorous conquests [One point Stability test at Difficulty four, for anyone who joins her].

In Dreams

The more sensitive Investigators (choose the two most eager to learn about the archipelago) will be troubled by bad dreams, which ratchet up in intensity the closer the Austral gets to the Kerguelens. These nightmares should revolve around sources of Stability, gradually mixed with horrific landscapes of genocide and desolation. When land is finally sighted, the Kerguelen's uncompromising black basalt maps one to one with the dreams [One point Stability test at Difficulty 4]. The bad dreams should continue once ashore.

In Port Couvreux

Port Couvreux is the worst port in the Kerguelens. It is also the *only* port in the Kerguelens.

The «port» consists of a protected anchorage and a squat quadrangle of dull grey buildings, all fashioned, incongruously, in French rural style. Three of these are family homes, complete with porches that are useless in the relentless, howling winds. The fourth is a sheep-shearing shed. There are no sheep in sight. There are no sheep, period. The beach is littered with the rusting hulks of queer machinery, the remnants of the seal-oil industry. It is the most bleak and oppressive settlement imaginable.

The frigid wind, which rises to gale force at times, is a constant. The temperature hovers just above freezing. The sky, when not obscured by stinging rain, is an alarming, vibrant blue. To the south and west of Port Couvreux lie an imposing range of snowy hills, with the glaciated Mount Ross beyond them. To the north and east lie a complicated series of islands and bays and beyond them, the rough seas of the Antarctic ocean. The feeling of utter isolation is palpable - in sheer distance, this place is as far from civilization as it is possible to be and still find people living.

The Drop-Off

The last few colonists of the Compagnie Générale des Îles Kerguelen - the Le Galloudec, Petit, and Ménager families - are packing up their worn belongings to load aboard the Austral. Four women, one nursing a baby, stand in melancholy tableau on the shore as the Austral weighs anchor.

The Austral lingers just long enough to send ashore those bound for Port Couvreux and their supplies. The Austral heads back to sea for a check-in visit to the Crozet islands - she'll be back in two weeks. This should be enough time to pack up the colony, weatherproof and prepare the buildings for a long absence, and give the de la Rue's time for one last geological trip into the mountains.

Once everyone is ashore, the Austral sounds her fog-horn once and is gone. She and her crew will be back in two weeks, long after the events of the adventure have played out.

Pamela Ménager, clearly in charge, will supervise moving the supplies into the shearing shed and happily regale the Investigators with the background of the colony, if they are interested, perhaps over tea:

The archipelago was «discovered» in 1772. For the next hundred and twenty years, her abundant colonies of seals and ample harbors made the Kerguelens a choice destination for seal hunters (first fur, then elephant) as well as whalers seeking safe harbors for establishing stations. The rapacious destruction of these species brought extinction within the realm of possibility, and the sealing and whaling industries collapsed by the 1910's. The Keguelens are a long-neglected possession of France. In 1908, the French government granted two brothers license to exploit the Kerguelen archipelago. Henri and René Bossier founded the Compagnie Générale des Îles Kerguelen, which established a small colony at Port Couvreux with the aim of raising sheep as well as granting concessions to optimistic Norwegian and English whaling and sealing companies. The Antarctic waters, brutally depleted in the 19th century, could not sustain the whalers, and the ruins of their operations now dot Observatory Bay. Sheep failed to thrive in the harsh and barren environs, and the colony has finally given up. The last few colonists - the Le Galloudec, Petit, and Ménager families - are packing up their worn belongings and returning to France. When they have gone, the Kerguelens will again be completely, resolutely uninhabited.

The de la Rue's Depart

The de la Rues, with only two weeks, are eager to begin their expedition. After affectionate hugs and an exchange of gifts with the colonists they know well, they immediately set off in the direction of Lake Bontemps with heavy packs, leaving several crates of explosives behind for a planned swing back through Port Couvreux. There will be time for catching up, Andrée says laughingly, on the return voyage.

The Women

There are no men in Port Couvreux when the Austral arrives - they are all out on the slopes, herding sheep. Their wives and daughters will greet

the sudden influx of humanity with a mix of trepidation and delight.

Pamela Ménager is a confident woman and the obvious leader among them. Her daughter, Léone, is seventeen and quite striking. Both are cultists who serve the God of the Black Stone. Pamela knows she will never leave the Kerguelens, and that everyone in Port Couvreux is going to be killed to slake the God of the Black Stone's growing thirst as he awakens. Young Léone is more naive, but is very loyal to her mother and quite mad in her own right.

Play Pamela as a somewhat intense and powerful woman, self-assured and proud of her little colony. She's also, of course, barking mad, completely insane but highly stable (something Psychoanalysis and a prolonged conversation will reveal) - when the time comes, she won't hesitate to gut a man like a fish, stripped to the waist and covered in filth. Léone takes after her, and might take a liking to the youngest or most dashing of the Investigators. Alone among the cultists, Léone is likely to hesitate when it comes time to be beastly things - she will, at a minimum, be less direct in her treachery. The Ménager family attitude toward Adèle is one of concern - they fear that she's lost her mind, poor thing. Such stories. Consipracies, evil, and the devil. Such a pity.

Claudette Petit is a mousy older woman with the buttoned-down appearance of a librarian. She is not a cultist. Claudette is the most respectable and responsible-looking among the women. Reassurance and some time over tea will get Claudette to confess that she heartily disapproves of Adèle Le Galloudec, declaring her either insane or a hopeless layabout. Claudette is an excellent cook and has absolutely no idea there is an evil cult in her midst.

Play Claudette as a friendly, matronly woman. She's eager to please, very competent, quiet, and something of a scold. Investigators billeted to her home will find fresh-baked bread and clean sheets. When the cult strikes, she will be an early victim. Investigators who are kind to her and take her seriously may find they have a useful ally. When the cult springs into action, they should vent their wrath on Claudette in a particularly horrifying way.

Adèle Le Galloudec appears haggard and unkempt. Her hair is unwashed and her infant daughter Georgette cries constantly. Like the Ménagers, Claudette wears crystal jewelry fashioned from shards of Lemurian technology scavenged in the Kerguelens. She's quite obviously stressed and possibly unstable.

Play Adèle as an exhausted, nearly broken woman. She is unhinged and afraid, which Psychoanalysis will reveal. Her weird connection to the God of the Black Stone has not been kind to her, and Adèle's mind is a web of pseudo-religious consipracy. She fears the devil. She dreams of Satan and, in her mind, has had congress with him on the black stone. In the end Adèle is a victim, but she will obey Mrs. Ménager's commands, even killing for her. Here's some typical Adèle dialogue:

> «The Prince of Lies, the Prince of Lies, these are his islands, these are his mountains, Oh, I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is, that is Revelation 2:13 and I know your works, I do, I do. You can't fool me. You speak to me, don't you, I stood on a lofty mountain and saw a gigantic man, and another, a dwarf; and I heard as it were a voice of thunder, and drew nigh for to hear; and He spake unto me and said: I am thou, and thou art I; and wheresoever thou mayest be I am there.»

(History or Theology will recognize this as an adulteration of the only remaining text of the lost *Gospel of Eve*, as quoted by Epiphanus. Adèle is well read and trying to describe the experience of wearing the Lemurian shard.)

> «Oh, the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him, weren't they? Weren't they? And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, (whisper) Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? Well, who? You? Me? No, sir. No, sir.»

> «Oh, they are beautiful are they not? Such fine jewelry, such a thing of wonder. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; that's Revelation 21:11. Léon made them for us, so lovely.»

> **[Core Clue] The women run Port Covreux, and Pamela runs the women.**

Credit Rating or Anthropology will clearly illustrate the social pecking order - Adèle Le Galloudec is at the bottom, and Pamela Ménager is at the top. They are all poor women; the shepherding has been a dismal failure and they are a step above wards of the state with Credit Ratings of one. Despite their poverty, there is some fine jewelry on display around the necks and ear lobes of the women. Alone among the women, Claudette does not wear some remarkable ornament.

Theology or Reassurance will suggest that Adèle's religious mania is not consistent with a mentally ill and deeply Catholic person. A one-point

spend reveals that she is transfering or sublimating some other experience that is too terrifying for her to articulate consciously, and that whatever horror she has encountered has driven her completely mad.

Dinner in Port Couvreux

After some initial pleasantries, the moving of supplies and the distribution of mail, the women will focus on preparing a large dinner in the Ménager home. Social opportunities will be abundant. The women will be delighted by gossip of the world, recent newspapers, and particularly fresh fruit and vegetables. All three homes will be opened to Investigators, and the women will divide them for sleeping purposes among their cramped dwellings. The shepherds - Georges Le Galloudec, Pierre Petit and Léon Ménager - are not expected back for another day at least.

They each wear crystal pendants fashioned from Lemurian shards by her husband Léon. Any Investigator talking to Pamela, Léone, or Adèle will be drawn to the pendants - they are beautiful and quite out of place amid the hardcrabble colony. Léon Ménager, an amateur jeweler, has assembled simple ornaments for each of the cultists - simple rings for himself and Georges, a substantial pendant for his wife Pamela, and bracelets for Adèle Le Galloudec and his daughter Léone. The crystal is beautiful and impossible to miss. They are all worn as jewelry, so a close examination will require either theft or social finesse.

Geology, Flattery or Reassurance will reveal that the crystals are local. The shepherds occasionally find them on the ground all over the islands. Geology or Physics (core), and a chance to examine a necklace, will indicate details of their structure and provenance (see «The Shards», below).

For Investigators who get a chance to handle some jewelry, see «Leon's Workshop» below.

Sleeping arrangements are flexible, but there's no space for more than three Investigators in any one home, and it would be impolitic to choose favorites. The barn is not a practical choice in the cold, wet Kerguelen night, but a more paranoid Investigator might prefer it to the alternatives.

Preparations for Departure

The families are all in the process of packing, and their various possessions are in crates for the most part. A picture of difficult life in isolation rapidly emerges - worn tools, tattered and much-mended clothing, dog-eared books curled with salt spray. Everything smells vaguely off, a combination of elephant seal oil, rotting kelp, and all things sheep. Despite this, the Petit and Ménager houses are well kept and as clean as it is possible to keep them. The Le Galloudec house is a wreck - peeling paint, filthy floor boards, and a general sense of chaos and distress. The colony is to be mothballed - doors and windows covered with plywood, oil drained from machinery, and everything tidied up for some future attempt.

Investigators may enter any of these homes, and the shearing barn, under the pretext of weather-proofing, packing and preparing materials for the Austral's return. An observant Keeper might require a Reassurance spend, or perhaps a related interpersonal ability, if there is to be less packing and more snooping into boxes and under mattresses.

Adèle's Bedroom

Adèle Le Galloudec keeps a leather-bound journal, which is prominently displayed on her night stand. An Investigator could use Filch to steal it, or persuade Adèle to give them a look with Flattery. It's no secret, and she is weirdly proud of it.

It appears to be written in gibberish, interspersed with strange angular drawings. Languages will identify the text as a bastardized form of Dravidian, perhaps Old Tamil. Tucked in the pages is an odd page torn from an old scientific journal (handout #4), a red herring.

A one point Cthulhu Mythos spend will indicate that it is actually Lemurian, a suppressed language that requires paired right or left hands to write properly [Two point Stability test at Difficulty five].

If it is stolen, Adèle Le Galloudec wil assume her «dream journal» was lost in the packing and comment on it idly - which Mrs. Ménager will carefully note. If confronted, Adèle will reclaim her dream journal and rave about the devil, keeping her daughter away from the Investigators with whom he is no doubt in league.

The Shards

Léon Ménager has a small workshop attached to his house. Originally intended for storing seal-rendering equipment, the place retains the repellent, fishy odor of burnt seal oil. There is a crude workbench and a trio of kerosene lanterns to illuminate it. A small chest contains fine tools for jewelry-making, and a locked metal box contains his silver findings and the handful of Lemurian shards to which they would be fitted.

Handling an individual shard has no immediate effect. Handling all the shards - Léon has enough to fill a drinking glass - definitely will.

[Core clue] The crystal shards are not naturally occurring.

Geology or Physics will indicate that they are machined, and that the

technology to mill crystals so finely does not exist [One point Stability test at Difficulty four].

A one-point spend in History, Geology, or Library Use in conjunction with handling any Lemurian shards can trigger Flashback #3: «Southern Ocean Glass».

The shards are tuned to some ineffable Lemurian resonance. The God of the Black Stone forms connections with those who handle and keep the shards. It communicates with them - at first in vague unease, then in dreams, and then, terribly, in powerful daytime visions. All of these merely tease at the full effect of an intact artifact (See «The Diadem», below). For Investigators who keep a shard in their pocket, spend even a few minutes sorting or handling Leon's collection, or deliberately keep these objects close to them, contact occurs in stages:

- Stage one: Vague unease. General paranoia. Anyone keeping a shard close to their person for more than a few minutes will experience this. This is the intensity experienced by dream-wracked Investigators onthe inbound journey.

- Stage two: Stage one, plus burial dreams. Nightmares of suffocation, entrapment, and panic. Anyone sleeping with a shard in their pocket, or having brief contact with a large mass of them, will be wracked by horrific nightmares upon their next sleep. [Two point Stability test at Difficulty four each night].

- Stage three: Stages one and two, plus synaesthetic visions. Anyone in heavy, regular contact with the shards (such as wearing one of the large pendants or sleeping in Léon's workshop) will begin to hear tinnitus-like ringing when he looks at certain colors, a piercing noise that modulates into a kind of scream with sustained viewing. The only soothing color is black, particularly the black of the Kerguelen's native basalt. There is a voice behind all the screaming but it cannot be understood [Three point Stability test at Difficulty four per day].

German Visitors

This scene can begin whenever the Keeper finds the pace lagging, or when the Investigators have had ample opportunity to poke around Port Couvreux and its surroundings. It's very appropriate after short trips out to the Black Stone and Cape Kersaint, but can occur right away if play time is short. A ship's horn sounds - the Austral has returned! But it hasn't - a weather-beaten fishing boat called the Tenerife is dropping anchor off the settlement, and three Germans are coming ashore. One of them wears an SS uniform. They are Schneider, Faber, and Müller .

Dr. Walter Schneider is an old man, the only one who has been to the Kerguelens before. He came with

Drygalski in 1903 and was present when the God of the Black Stone was put down. Schneider's entire life has hinged around the upcoming occultation of Regulus. He's Captain of the Tenerife, and if all goes according to plan he will serve as the Lemurian high priest and slaughter his colleagues, go raving mad in the process, and save the world. He knows the most about the Mythos, and has spent a lifetime learning about the Kerguelens.

Ludwig Müller is barely twenty, and the designated survivor. In thirty years, he'll assume Schneider's role. For the present, he's the Ahnenerbe's representative charged with documenting everything. He also serves as boatswain and cook aboard the Tenerife.

Thomas Faber is an old-line Nazi with a low Party membership number. An Unterstumbannfuher in the SS, Faber is the equivalent of a Lieutenant. He sees the ultimate outcome of the expedition as his duty, and he approaches it with a creepy zeal. He serves as First Mate and Engineer aboard the Tenerife. When Schneider occasionally wavers, Faber keeps them on task and in line.

The German expedition feels the weight of history. They - like Drygalski's expedition before them, and Baron von Schleinitz' before *them* - intend to repeat a ritual that has saved the world at thirty year intervals, ever since the God of the Black Stone was awoken in 1772. It is not a jovial affair, and the buzz of activity at Port Couvreux does nothing to ease their spirits. A death-slaked God can be drawn to the surface using the sacrificial diadem - at the expense of permanent madness for the noble volunteer and the regrettable deaths of his sacrifices. If the Black God appears while Venus is disturbed in the southern sky, in this case by the occultation of the star Regulus, it can be driven back into torpor for another three decades.

If all goes exactly right one of the German team, the young Ludwig Müller will live to organize the expedition in the 1960's. But things are *not* going exactly right, they are missing a man, they are missing critical equipment with him, and a sudden influx of visitors has not eased their minds.

The Shearing Shed

The Germans, commanded by Dr. Schneider, make it clear that theirs is not a social call. Their expedition meteorologist, Ulrich Buschner, is missing, and they are very concerned about him. Has he been seen? They are tense, formal, and seem on the edge of losing their tempers.

Since none of the three homes is large enough to host three additional guests, the women will insist on an informal gathering and meal in the sheep shearing shed. This building is not convivial - rusty chains are draped over delapidated pens and the tools of husbandry hang from pegs. Tablecloths and kerosene lanterns do little cheer the place up, and the entire meeting will have a vaguely surreal quality. The Germans are obviously torn between their desire to continue their search and the need for decorum in the French-owned archipelago.

Schneider, Faber, and Müller will sound out the colonists and recent arrivals - the principal questions will be asked again and again. Have you seen Buschner? Have you seen *anyone?* When are you leaving? There is an urgency to their inquiries, and they are clearly desperate to find their lost man.

[Core clue] The Germans are under great strain, barely keeping their emotions in check.

The Assess Honesty ability will indicate that the Germans, despite their courtesy and forced good cheer, and are hiding something.

A further Assess Honesty spend is entirely appropriate; one point will reveal that the Germans are completely sincere, if dreadfully stressed. They desperately want to find their man, Buschner, and they want to know why the Investigators have come. The social call is a great opportunity for the Investigators to meet and learn more about the Germans. The Keeper should give everyone a chance to mingle and sound out the newcomers. The players will surely have questions. Some likely ones, with answers, are below. Note that anyone speaking German will find gaining the visitor's confidence much easier.

Who Are you? What is the Black Drop Society?

> «Schwarzen Tropfen Gesellschaft, a scientific society based in Munich. We have an interest in the Antarctic islands and have been coming to the Kergulens for many years.»

With a one-point Physics spend:

> «We're named after the astronomical phenomena observed during the Transit of Venus. Venus seems to soften at the edges and forms, literally, a «black drop»; it's charming really that a simple limitation of lens technology in previous centuries created such a mystery. Orbital bodies are often strangely perturbed by one another.»

With a one-point Occult spend, this would be a good time to trigger a flashback for an appropriate Investigator as well, if it hasn't already appeared during the session (see flashback #1, «The Black Drop Society»). It should be someone who could plausibly have been to Berlin in the last five years.

Why would Buschner disappear?

> «We don't know. He has a problem with alcohol, so that may be a contributing factor. When he left he took camping gear and a lot of schnapps, so we're confident he'll turn up. Probably just a bender, although a dangerous one. We simply must find him before he is injured or worse.»

Assess Honesty indicates this is a suspiciously prosaic read on what is a highly unusual situation.

A one-point Reassurance (Müller), Flattery (Faber) or Bureaucracy (Schneider) spend will get a German to open up. Buschner left because he had «certain disagreements» with how the expedition was being handled. He took along some sensitive equipment and is behaving like a spoiled child, unwilling to live up to his responsibilities. His absence puts the entire expedition in jeopardy. They are confident he'll be found or return on his own. Faber, if asked, will detail the beating he'll give his comrade when they next meet.

What are you doing here?

> «We come to Betsy Cove regularly to do geophysical measurements, astronomical observations, a variety of scientific tasks that benefit from regular but slow data collection. The Society last sponsored an expedition in 1903. Before that, we were involved with the Transit of Venus expedition of 1874, and first visited in 1844.»

The Physics ability will cause an Investigator to realize that each of these dates corresponds to a minor occultation of Venus (Eta Virginis in 1844, Acrab in 1903, and Regulus … oh dear … this week) or a Transit (1874 or, oddly, 1772, the year the archipelago was discovered.) The Germans will laugh about this remarkable coincidence. Perhaps it was planned as an elaborate joke in their grandfather's day.

Reassurance or Flattery, combined with some alcohol, could get any of the Germans to slip about their interest in «the geology of Mount Lyall.»

Any Mythos-related question

> «I'm afraid I've no idea what you are talking about.»

Assess Honesty will certainly indicate this is a lie. A two-point Reassurance spend will get the German to admit this himself, with a strained warning not to go too far in that line of inquiry, because dreadful things are afoot but are, thankfully, well in hand. This sort of questioning will cause the Germans to depart from Port Couvreux more rapidly.

The Germans should stay for a while and then make their apologies - they've left a man tending camp, and need to get back to him. Anyone who has approached them earnestly, who has treated them with respect, will get a sincere and somewhat melancholy warning to leave the Kergeuelens as soon as possible. If anyone proposes a visit to Betsy Cove, the Germans will say there is no point - they will be very focused on finding Buschner.

Another German, Bodo Herberger, was left behind in Betsy Cove, and if there is food, they will make sure to take a plate for him.

The Frenzy

Pamela Ménager and Adèle Le Galloudec know that the time of the God of the Black Stone's rising is nigh, and that he thirsts for blood. They know they will never leave the archipelago. They will slit Claudette Petit's throat and try to murder the Investigators while they sleep, setting fire to all the buildings with kerosene and attacking them with a revolver and carving knives - perhaps using the Investigator's own weapons against them. This can happen at any time after the German visit - even the same night - ideally after the Investigators have exhausted the clues in and around Port Couvreux and before they meet Buschner (see below).

Rules for dunplay are on page 65, and fire rules on page 68 of the Trail of Cthulhu rulebook.

If this goes poorly, they will attempt to flee into the fog, but a ruthless Keeper should be able to create terror, injury, and peril first. Ideally Port Couvreux should be burned to the ground during a dramatic and chaotic fight to the death, but any outcome will be interesting. Having the colonists explode into murderous rage and burn down their own settlement is both terrifying and disconcerting [Four point Stability test at Difficulty four].

The Aftermath

Young Léone Ménager will bide her time and play the victim in the aftermath of the frenzy, begging for protection and aid. If she is trusted, she will viciously strike the moment she can do great harm.

Assess Honesty or Occult will see through her murderous deception. A further two-point spend in Interrogation will cause Léone to reveal the cult's plans - to murder everyone in the Kerguelens, and then themselves, to appease their God.

If captured, any of the adult cultists will be more candid. A one-point spend in Interrogation or Flattery will encourage them to spill out the simple but deadly plan. Their goal is to kill, because the God of the Black Stone demands sacrifice. Elephant seals and sheep are not enough; he wants to be free and demands human blood. He is coming. He is impatient. Thirty years is for him a heartbeat, but his pulse quickens.

With enemies lurking in the fog and no means of escaping the archipelago, the Investigators will have some difficult choices to make. Whatever choice they make is fine. Here are some likely possibilities:

[Head for Mount Lyall] Outstanding! Let them arrive shortly after the Germans. (See «The Unholy Lambeth of the Antipodes» below)

[Head for Betsy Cove] Fantastic! Let them arrive as the Germans are preparing to depart for the Lemurian temple on the slope of Mount Lyall. (See «The Old Station at Betsy Cove» below)

Either of these options gives the Keeper plenty of opportunities to challenge the players with environmental hazards and murderous cultists. The journey should be as convoluted or straightforward as player excitement dictates. One final option could possibly remain:

[Wait for the return of the Austral] This option might crop up if they have prisoners or serious doubts about how to proceed. It is less likely if the entire settlement is in ashes. Have Buschner arrive and beg them to leave the islands by any means necessary. Have the Germans return to plead for assistance. If they wish to wait it out, the German ritual will fail and the God of the Black Stone will come for them in this case. The end will be very grim indeed!

Around Port Couvreux

Anyone wanting to get a feel for the Kerguelens has three choices. They can walk up the beach to the west and find the altar, they can walk around the point to Cape Kersaint and find the cache, or they can head inland and find Mr. Petit. Any beach walkers can run into elephant seals, preferably on their return voyage, as the sun sets. Investigators heading inland may become involved in some deadly environmental hazard or they may stumble across a field of Kerguelen cabbage. Beyond the core scenes, the sequencing is up to the Keeper's descretion. Due to the peculiarities of local geography, anyone traveling *anywhere* on foot can't miss the altar or Mr. Petit, unless they are in a tearing hurry.

Cape Kersaint

Cape Kersaint looks out on the vast field of islets that pepper the north side of the Kerguelens. It is the eastern-most point on the Couvreux peninsula, noteworthy for the large pyramid of stones supporting a weathered flagstaff left by the military vessel Eure, which visited to assert French sovereignty in 1893. A sealed metal box containing legal documents and another containing foodstuffs intended for shipwreck survivors are buried beneath it. The History ability reveals the purpose and past of the curious monument.

The Altar

Five miles down the beach from Port Couvreux, near a rusting pile of seal-oil rendering tubs, the black stone beach is abruptly interrupted by a huge slab of shaped basalt. Scattered over the beach for hundreds of yards in either direction are the bleached bones of elephant seals. From the beach, across Beau Temp harbor and facing inland, a tiny canvas tent can clearly be seen pitched on the opposite beach. It's a twenty mile hike away, and inside it is Ulrich Buschner (see «The Meteorologist's Tent» below).

[Core clue] The stone has been used as a butchering block, and recently. The site is resonant with mythic implications.

Geology or Archaeology will indicate that the rectangular chunk must weigh a ton, and it was obviously dragged down from a nearby bluff to the high tide line, and is oriented according to some astronomical pattern.

Forensics will reveal fresh grooves and desiccated bits of tissue on the block.

A one point Astronomy spend pegs the block's orientation as not lunar or solar, but tied to the orbit of Venus in conjunction with the sun.

If Reassurance or Intimidation is employed, any of the women will matter-of-factly say that it is the black stone, and that it was dragged down in 1929. No one knows why, but the men occasionally use it as a chopping block for butchering seals and sheep.

Anyone Investigator of a paranoid bent and willing to spend a point of Occult will recall references to the God of the Black Stone: Several mentions of the God of the Black Stone can be easily recalled, if indeed it is the same entity. Golgorod, Gol-Goroth, The Black God, The Forgotten One, The God of the Black Stone. Mentioned as either a companion or alternate form of Groðgolka, Bird-God of Balsagoð.

As History will reveal, Balsagoð was apparently an island in the Atlantic to the southwest of present-day Spain, possibly a reference to Madiera. It's «Temple of Darkness» is mentioned with particular dread by several sources including the curious Norse fragment the *Saga of Tostig the Mad*.

The Norse connection runs deeper, if more obscure, as the Anthropology ability will reveal - A Baltic cult, mentioned in The *Saga of Þorkell the Fair*, worshipped a God called Golgoroð. Þorkell and his companion Æðelstan broke the cult 'after two stars joined in the heavens' by employing the witchery of an Icelandic Völva, who they later drowned in a lake

A further one-point Reassurance spend can persuade Adèle to voice her extreme misgivings, having seen sacrificial rites carried out on the slab more than once. She has, in fact, lain with the Devil upon the black stone - at least in her own mind. If closely questioned, the Keeper should elaborate on Adèle's religious mania at whatever length the players find interesting, transforming the very real rituals she has witnessed and participated in into symbolic couplings with Satan, gatherings of whip-tongued demons, a congress of anti-popes and Roman emperors, and esoteric symbols pulled from the Book of Revelation. Assess Honesty will indicate that, while confused in the particulars, her experience is on some level quite genuine.

It's worth noting that the cultists, when outed and pressed, will endlessly talk about their master, the God of the Black Stone, and this utilitarian slab is indeed the black stone where they slaughter elephant seals as sacrifices to him. It is not a sacred site, as anyone with the Archaeology ability will find obvious. It appears to be a feeble stand-in for what must be a more elaborate sacrificial complex somewhere more remote.

[Core clue] The altar has been used as a cache by Pierre Petit who is, or was, headed toward Mt. Lyall.

Sense Trouble, Conceal, or Archaeology will indicate that the base of the stone has recently been tampered with.

Jammed in a crack on the south side of the altar is anote, penned in hurried French and signed PP.

PP can be none other than Pierre Petit. It is on the back of an astronomical table (See handout #5, «Past Occultations and Perturbations of Venus»). Note that the entry for «this week» on the table is a convenient fiction - it means whatever week it happens to be in-game. In other words, in a few days it will happen again.

The History or Geology abilities will indicate that a trip to the base of Lyall would take three hard days overland. It would take a day if a skiff were available.

Traveling to Mt. Lyall would begin with passing the altar on the beach, and later the discovery of Pierre Petit's corpse (see below).

Pierre Petit's cliff

A well-worn track bisects the Couvreux peninsula and leads inland, heading west then south into rough, hilly terrain. Anyone traveling anywhere in the Kerguelens on foot will start on this track, so it is possible that this scene will happen later in the adventure.

There is a shepherd's camp a few hours walk from the settlement, empty but only just. Outdoorsman will reveal that the camp's former occupants - certainly the Shepherds - have been gone less than 12 hours.

Outdoorsman or Sense Trouble will cause an Investigator to note a curious, wheeling congregation of skuas perhaps two miles further inland. Skuas are sea birds and out of place in the interior.

At the base of a vertical cliff lies the body of Pierre Petit. He is on his back, facing the sky, and his eyes have been pecked out by skuas.

Forensics or Medicine will indicate that he fell - or was tossed - from the cliff and snapped his C4 vertebrae on impact, resulting in complete paralysis below the neck. He was alive when the skuas found him. Near his body is a pack and a fowling piece.

Petit's disfigured body tells a horrific story of his last helpless hours [Three point Stability test at Difficulty four].

The Clifftop

At the top of the cliff, where the skuas are still ominously active, a further horrific sight awaits. The settlement's sheep - perhaps two hundred animals, have been slaughtered. Their bloody carcasses form a massive ring some fifty feet in circumference [Three point Stability test at Difficulty four if closely examined, one point if observed from afar]. In the distance on the beach, Buschner's tent can be seen.

The Anthropology ability will establish the etiology of death - their throats were slashed in a ritual manner and the animals were bled out one after the other. A one-point Forensics or Biology spend will indicate that whatever happened was heavy work among panicked animals, and must have taken days. The ground is black with their blood. There are no signs of the perpetrators, but the undulating hills and moss-covered cliffs stretch out in every direction.

The Meteorologist's Tent

Somewhere along the rocky shore of Beau Temps harbor, opposite the black altar, past the cliffs and the skuas and poor Petit, a two-man canvas tent has been hastily erected.

Ulrich Buschner, the Black Drop Society meteorologist, is huddled in the tent. He is drunk and exhausted. Outdoorsman clearly indicates that he has been traveling hard, on foot. Empty bottles of schnapps are scattered across the floor of his tent and he has fouled himself. Distraught and pathetic, he is not fit to travel, or even to carry on a conversation.

Buschner's brought along the absurd «ceremonial headdress» that Dr. Schneider plans on wearing, to throw a further spanner in the works (see «The Diadem» below). It is carelessly stuffed in the bottom of his pack. A cursory inspection (or Evidence Collection) will find it. Buschner will not only reveal it, but gladly give it to any Investigator who expresses an interest in it. The thing is like a millstone around his neck and it torments him with nightmares.

The application of Medicine or First Aid can sober Buschner up, given time. Until he's lucid, all that can be gathered is that Buschner's run away; he's headed for Port Couvreux and, he hopes, safety and refuge. He's terrified that Faber is after him to drag him back to Betsy Cove. He'll insist on being taken to Port Couvreux to await the return of the Austral - not knowing the local situation there. He swears he had nothing to do with the slaughter or the killing of Petit. Forensics or Assess Honesty will confirm his protestations. Play Buschner as a man with a guilty conscience, eager to reveal what he knows - which is everything. For Investigators, meeting Buschner should be a turning point. There's no need to hold anything back.

> **[Core clue] The Black Drop Society are planning a mass suicide occult ritual on the slopes of Mt. Lyall. It's a blasphemous tradition spanning generations and, after careful consideration, Buschner wants no part in it. The Lemurian diadem is essential for the final ceremony.**

Interrogation or Reassurance will get him talking. So will more alcohol.

Buschner has the Tenerife's dory, a capable little boat with an outboard motor and a sail, well concealed along the shore nearby. He's banged her up pretty bad, and Mechanical Repair will be necessary to make her seaworthy again. Piloting - a skill Buschner does not possess - could get her to the northern terminus of the Studer valley, or Betsy cove, in six hours or less. The dory can hold a dozen people but can't stray far from shore.

Buschner will tag along with the Investigators as far as they will let him, out of self-preservation. He will beg them not to go to Betsy Cove or Mt. Lyall, but if they go, he will follow, confident in their protection. If they want no part of the poor meteorologist, he will wander off in the direction of Port Couvreux. Buschner can simply vanish, or he can return later as the Keeper wishes - perhaps as a prisoner of the cult, dropped screaming from a high peak into the temple, or as a reluctant hero, appearing at the precise moment an ally is needed. Finally, Buschner could return as a replacement for a dead player character at any point.

The Diadem

The diadem that Buschner has stolen is an artifact from the unthinkable past. It fell into the hands of a German seal-hunter in the 1810's. Wrought from silver and a breathtaking array of gorgeous, unearthly crystalline forms, the diadem is a Lemurian crystal headpiece intended to be worn by the high priest supervising blood sacrifices. It is attuned to the slumbering mind of the God of the Black Stone. Wearing it draws the thing forth. Buschner stole the diadem when he ran off, and the Germans will be eager to recover it. It will, most likely, be a strong point of contention.

Although there is no direct communication, the wearer of the Lemurian diadem becomes aware of the God of the Black Stone's unfathomable thoughts and desires [Two point Stability test at Difficulty four]. The wearer will experience a sort of malignant synaesthesia as the Forgotten one makes contact - a series of crippling synaesthetic episodes invariably follow, where all colors save black become shrieking, hellish voices and the smells of salt air and seal meat are blinding, brutal light of a color that cannot be classified or even described. Behind this mental noise, a malevolent intelligence squats like a great toad, trapped and unmoving, helpless and filled with rage. Close contact from extended wearing of the diadem is devastating [Five point Stability test at Difficulty five once per day].

As Buschner or Schneider will gamely explain, the God is implacably attracted by the wearer, and Lemurian technology is the only thing that can cause it to become sessile. Wearing the diadem invariably (and perhaps mercifully) causes insanity before the God arrives to claim its offering. They need it for the ritual to have any chance of success.

Further Afield

Backcountry Ambush

Antagonist Reaction

Georges Le Galloudec and Léon Ménager are cultists, and they are busy waking their God. The sheep's blood they have spilled is just the beginning, and there will be more. They know that the Black Drop Society has come to drive the Forgotten One back - the god has told them as much. At the time of the Austral's arrival, they are on their way overland to Betsy Cove to murder the Germans. The Keeper should feel free to split Georges and Léon up, have them snipe at Investigators or cause murderous trouble, and otherwise serve as a menace. The de la Rue's are also cultists, and can appear as a couple or individually at any point in the adventure, up to and including the final confrontation at the Lemurian temple. There are four of them in total; use their appearance to help inject a sense of danger and urgency and to pace the game. In other words, when things begin to drag, have a cultist attack.

One way to structure the cultist's actions is to "schedule" four appearances. Assume each is individual, but if a solo antagonist survives, he will join his comrade for the next. This way, even if the Investigators kill or apprehend a cultist after each encounter, there will always be another around the corner. A wise Keeper will hold one (perhaps the alluring Andrée) in reserve, at the temple, with dynamite.

Good opportunities for cultist attacks: In the backcountry anywhere, in the cave, during the frenzy at Port Couvreux, en route to Mt. Lyall, and at the temple itself. Cultists are all armed and can assume the role of sniper, taking pot-shots from some hidden position. They can trigger rockfalls in the mountains, either through careful preparation or with explosives. They can try to sneak into camp and cut Investigator's throats in the night. They can try to kidnap someone, douse them with kerosene, and burn them alive on a nearby peak. Be fiendish, and incur Stability tests.

A Normal Day in the Kerguelens

The tall peaks that rise both east and west in the archipelago mean that darkness falls suddenly, like a curtain being drawn. A judicious Keeper will use this to good effect at a moment when the investigators desperately need light and landmarks.

A cold, wet fog is ubiquitous on the rare occasions when the wind calms. Certain protected valleys will be routinely choked with fog as well. There is always precipitation - vary it between driving horizontal rain, sleet, and light snow. In these conditions disorientation is a real concern. People who are lost, confused, and without points of reference tend to fall into rivers and off cliffs. Use a sudden break in the weather - a startling moment of utter calm, with sunshine beneath mare's-tail clouds - to offer an unsettling contrast. The weather can change in minutes.

The various challenges and events outlined here are appropriate for any part of this adventure, and are thus floating scenes. If the Investigators are more than fifty feet from Port Couvreux or Betsy Cove, anything listed below is fair game. Ideally, these should all be confronted at some time during the game. Elephant seals can pose a problem any time the Investigators are on the beach or near the coast.

These scenes can be inserted any time the Investigators stray from Port Couvreux or Betsy Cove. They all add a huge amount of Kerguelen-specific color, so don't neglect them!

Drowning and Falling

Use these separately or together:

The uneven and unpredictable terrain includes sheer basalt cliffs that seem to appear out of nowhere, their edges blending in with the lichen in the distance. A Sense Trouble roll at difficulty 6 or two-point Outdoorsman spend will to notice a cliff. If an Investigator fails, make an Athletics test, at difficulty 5, to avoid walking into space. An Investigator takes 1d6 damage to his Health after a nasty fall and will be slowed by his injuries.

A Sense Trouble test or one-point Outdoorsman spend to avoid slipping on the moss-covered bank of a partially concealed and ice cold stream. If an Investigator fails, make an Athletics check, at difficulty 5, to avoid falling in. Falling in will result in a 1d3 hour delay as well as lost or ruined equipment (A successful Preparedness roll against difficulty 6 means the Investigator packed well). In addition, a soaked Investigator takes 1d6 damage to his Health and will have a deep chill in his bones for the remainder of the adventure.

The rules for drowning and falling are on page 68.

A terrifying separation

It's easy to get separated from the group and thoroughly lost. A disoriented Investigator is in real trouble. Being lost and isolated in such a harsh environment can be terrifying - particularly if cultists remain on the prowl. It requires a one-point spend of Outdoorsman to avoid losing 1d3 hours per day due to confusion and disorientation. The sheer terror of utter isolation is dangerous [Two point Stability test at Difficulty four]. The de la Rues are probably tracking the Investigators. Have them move in for the kill on an isolated and terrified victim. Alternately, have the Germans find him and play it for subtle menace, although their intentions are purely good.

Elephant Seal Statistics

Abilities: Athletics 14, Health 10, Scuffling 12. Subtract four from all these statistics for females.

Hit Threshold: 3 (Big)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: Not applicable.

Weapon: +2 (Bite), +4 (crush). An elephant seal will always try to chase away a threat. If this fails, it will overrun a target as its initial attack, immobilizing a human-sized foe beneath it. If this fails, or if there are multiple attackers, it can bite once per round. Females can only bite, at +1, and will arrive to enter the fray gradually.

Armor: -1 vs. guns and spears, -3 vs. everything else (tough hide)

Elephant Seals

The only remotely dangerous inhabitant of the Kerguelens (other than human beings and Great Old Ones) is the southern elephant seal, *Mirounga leonina*. These enormous and strange-looking animals are common on some Kerguelen beaches, and they are not to be trifled with.

A bull elephant seal is seven thousand pounds and sixteen feet of ferociously possessive marine mammal. An investigator wandering into a bull's harem of females, or even crossing a beach in his territory, is going to be chased, mauled, and crushed. A bull in danger will be assisted by females in his harem. An Investigator can avoid triggering an elephant seal's territorial instincts with a one-point Biology spend.

Keepers should note that elephant seals may well appear terrifying and unearthly to investigators unfamiliar with them. A description like this isn't out of place:

> «First you smell it - a rotting smell, like fish carcasses and seaweed baking in the sun. Then, through the icy fog, illuminated by a weak blue pall of moonlight, you see … something. It seems to be struggling forward on tiny appendages, its massive, slug-like body undulating hideously as it grinds the black stones beneath it. The thing has a head, or what passes for a head - a lolling, black-eyed plug that ends in a horrible tuberous mass that seems to writhe up and down of its own accord as though filled with blasphemous erectile tissue. Viscous fluid drips down from this protuberant obscenity onto eager, canine teeth. It roars as it sees you and charges with terrifying, astonishing speed, even as its horrific bellow echoes off the nearby cliffs.»

For fun, a Keeper can lay on the purple prose and ask the player what his character thinks he is witnessing. If the result is «an elephant seal, silly», make all plain and move on. If the result is «something unnatural», you are doing something right [One point Stability test at Difficulty four].

The Cabbage Patch

In a sheltered valley beneath brooding hills, the Investigators walk into a vast field of strange plants. They are green, but unlike anything one might expect to find in such a place. It is a vaguely unnerving dinosaur, something disturbingly alien.

A one-point Botany spend will resolve any apprehension - they are Kerguelen cabbage (*Pringlea antiscorbutica)*, a

deeply weird plant, slow-growing, self-pollinating, and found only on the remote southern islands. It contains a pale yellow oil which is rich in vitamin C but smells terrible - one commentator described it as smelling «like the odor of the lowest sort of woman in the Algeirs casbah». Kerguelen cabbage has warded off scurvy in the Antarctic latitudes for years. Thanks to rabbits introduced in the 1870's, it is now quite rare. A trained botanist will also know the life-saving properties of the plant, and indicate the curious and singular nature of the species, hinting at a million years of isolation.

Sables Mouvants

The Kerguelens rarely dip below freezing (or reach 50F), and nearly every non-vertical surface in the interior is composed of a sucking, sandy, lichen-covered mud. In places - a practiced eye can spot them on the rare clear day - this mud forms a quicksand-like mush that can swallow a man whole, and has.

Make a Sense Trouble roll at difficulty 5 to notice a patch of quicksand. If an Investigator fails, make an Athletics check at difficulty 6 to to extricate himself. This check is easier by one point if the player describes his character remaining calm and attempting to lie flat, and by one additional point if other Investigators are on hand to assist with ropes.

Have one of the shepherd-cultists waiting near a likely quicksand patch, to start sniping the moment someone is stuck. A failed roll means that the Investigator is sucked under for long enough to experience hypoxia-induced hallucinations before struggling free [Two point Stability test at Difficulty four].

The Cave

This location is en route from Port Couvreux to Betsy Cove. It could be used in conjunction with a dire need for shelter - a raging sudden storm, powerful pursuers, or simply a safe place to rest. Exploring the cave is a wonderful time for murderous cultists to find them.

Outdoorsman or Geology will reveal that the basalt cliffs of the interior are dotted with caves. Enterprising Investigators (or ambushing cultists) will use them for shelter. One in particular is already occupied.

Just inside the entrance to an attractive, dry cave are the remains of a fire and a crude driftwood sledge. Nearby is the well-preserved corpse of an American whaler from the 1840's, still wrapped in elephant seal hides.

In his mummified hands, he clutches a diary. The whaler never gives his name, but he served aboard the *Shaw Perkins*, which was lost with all hands on Kerguelen's lee shore. By his account he was the only survivor. The unknown mariner's dairy details his increasingly futile struggle to survive, and his discovery of the Temple of the Black Stone. See handout #6 («Shaw Perkins Diary»)

The Old Station at Betsy Cove

The History ability will allow an Investigator to recall that Betsy Cove, after Port Couvreux, is the best anchorage on the northern side of the Kerguelens. The German Transit of Venus expedition of 1874 was based here, as was the shore party from Drygalski's German South Polar expedition of 1903, commanded by Emil Worth.

Remains of both expeditions dot the landscape. The hut built by the 1903 team sits immediately adjacent to a weather-worn cemetery filled with bleached wooden grave markers - Norwegian and American whalers as well as members of the '03 expedition. Two of the graves, curiously, are Chinese. Nearby, the foundation of the meteorological and geomagnetic observatory built in 1874 is still visible, the structure itself long since destroyed. Rusted debris - a whaling try-pot, seal-hunting apparatus, oil drums - litter the landscape. All thsi evidence of human tampering is in stark contrast the the powerful natural beauty of the place. Mt. Crozier looms over it all to the south, dusted in snow.

The Tenerife is anchored in the cove. She is a battered, metal-hulled seine-net fishing boat, barely adequate for the harsh seas of the fiftieth southern parallel. The Black Drop Society expedition serves as her crew. When the terrible work is finished, Ludwig Müller intends to sail her back to Cape Town alone. In a pinch she could carry eight passengers, but it would be a very unpleasant voyage.

The German expedition has spread out on shore and re-occupied the remaining hut. Pungent elephant seal meat hangs from spits, giving the entire place a barbaric, disorderly, and positively un-German atmosphere.

When the Investigators arrive, a funeral is underway.

If your game takes place in the early thirties, the Germans are self-funded and at wits end. The political situation at home is chaotic and there's no money for science, so the expedition will have a ratty and haphazard character.

If your game takes place after 1935, the expedition is government-sponsored, well funded but highly covert, and Unterstumbannfuher Thomas Faber will be carefully documenting everything for the Ahnenerbe.

Bodo's Funeral

Bodo Herberger was a morose Bohemian, the fifth and final member of the crew, and the one who remained behind in Betsy Cove. The cult showed up and murdered him, and Dr. Walter Schneider is officiating a very informal service at his grave. When the Germans become aware of the Investigators (Thomas Faber is on watch with a rifle), they will exchange meaningful looks and welcome them to Betsy Cove, explaining that one of their own has been murdered. It has put a rather ominous kink in their plans, and the arrival of the outsiders presents a slender reed of hope.

If Buschner is with them, he will look to the Investigators to protect him from Faber and Schneider. He is convinced that they will kill him, and in a way he's right.

The Investigators will be invited to rest and share a meal, and questioned about their knowldge, intentions, and the location of the diadem. With nothing to lose, the Germans will explain the purpose of the Black Drop Society to them and hope they can work together.

The Plan

The plan is simple. With Ludwig Müller trailing behind to collect the diadem and then embark on a solo voyage back to civilization, the rest of the expedition will proceed to the temple on the slope of Mt. Lyall. As the occultation of Regulus approaches, the designated sacrifices will say their final goodbyes and drink sedatives. Dr. Schneider will then don the Lemurian diadem and summon the God of the Black Stone. When the foul thing surfaces, Schneider will hold it in place with the blood of his friends. It will be held transfixed beneath the baleful occultation long enough to break its will and drive it back into the basalt. Dr. Schneider will either be taken as a final sacrifice or be driven raving mad and die in the mountains.

It's not a great plan, but it has worked before. This time, however, there are two problems - the cult, and Buschner's defection.

Bodo Herberger was well versed in Mythos lore and fully cognizant of what he had to do. Herberger viewed it as a huge cosmic joke - he had terminal cancer and was a lifelong bachelor with no offspring. He was to be a designated sacrifice, but the cult (the de la Rue's, the shepherds, both, it is up to the Keeper) showed up and murdered him.

Herberger's death means the Germans are one man short of their goal, and Buschner makes two. They can't occupy the God of the Black Stone long enough to keep it from being unleashed upon the twentieth century. Several options present themselves:

They can seek two volunteers from among the Investigators, coming clean about their true purpose. This should always be the Keeper's first line of reasoning. The Germans will, if necessary, seek the Investigators out, aid them against the cultists, and bring them to Betsy Cove if necessary. Investigator's Drives may make volunteering for suicide easier or more difficult.

They can enlist Ludwig Müller , entrusting the mission of the Black Drop Society to the Investigators. This is not going to be a popular choice, and some of them (Faber in particular) will fight against it quite vigorously. They will still be a man short in this case. Faber might, in fact, find an alternate means of acquiring some unwilling sacrifices if no volunteer is found. There is no force on Earth that will persuade Buschner to lay down his life voluntarily.

They can abandon their mission and leave the Kerguelens. This is obviously a terrible idea (See «Ramming the God» below).

At some point, the Investigators should find themselves on the run from the cultists and in the company of the Germans. Whatever choice they make is fine, and the occultation of Regulus is the ticking clock that all the interested parties must abide by.

Note that if the Lemurian diadem is destroyed, missing, or concealed, Schneider can assemble a weak substitute out of crystal fragments.

Leaving for the Temple

The Germans have little time, and will be preparing for the expedition to Mt. Lyall the same evening that the Investigators arrive.

The Hunting Party

All the cultists know the Kerguelen interior very well. They know how to travel efficiently and they know the best places to wait, watch, and ambush. The terrain channels travel into certain valleys, and there are weak rocks embedded in the cliffs. If an ambush is in the offing, a freak patch of good weather can be deadly.

Cultists can trigger rock slides, even coaxing multi-ton trap-rock basalt columns to come crashing down,

blocking exits and crushing the unwary or unlucky. This is much more exciting than random pot-shots from the clifftops! Another nice touch would be to visually tie the chaotic spires of basalt falling on the Investigator's heads to the unholy temple when that finally comes into view.

A Sense Trouble test at difficulty 5 will always spot an ambush in advance. Any German volunteers the cultists manage to kill will need to be replaced for the ritual to be effective.

Falling rocks present a deadly danger. An Athletics test at difficulty 4 will allow an Investigator to evade the tumbling stones. Failure results in a crushing whirlwind of (+2) damage.

The Unholy Lambeth of the Antipodes

This is the finale of the adventure - the God of the Black Stone will rise or be banished for another thirty years. In terms of timing, take dramatic liberties to introduce the occultation immediately after their arrival at the temple. Create a sense of urgency, and allow the cultists to try and slow them down. Arriving too late, however, would be absolutely no fun.

The Valley

A protected valley deep in the interior wends its way beneath tall and unforgiving peaks. Hot springs bubble and steam, but no rivers flow - the ground consists of marshy pools of glacial swamp and difficult bergschrund. Unlike everywhere else in the kerguelens, no moss or lichen seems to grow, and no wind blows. High above, the temple clings to the side of Mt. Lyall like a deep ocean crab.

The Temple of the Forgotten One

The temple is tucked into a natural amphitheater on the north face of Mt. Lyall. It is very inaccessible. Tall crags block the horizon in all directions, and the entire area is blanketed in near-perpetual shadow. The towering pinnacles of trap-rock basalt, very much like the ones that cultists have probably tipped onto them earlier, jut from the mountainside at unwholesome angles.

Built on a wide ledge, the temple itself consists of level ground. Shards of Lemurian crystal litter the whole area, and the desiccated, scattered debris of previous Black Drop Society expeditions is in evidence everywhere. The air seems heavier, thicker, more oppressive.

Six eccentrically-aligned and ornately carved pillars ring the temple complex. At the center is a black stone - not a crude sacrificial slab like the one on the beach by Port Couvreux, but a true altar, built for something outside human scale. Before it is a steaming crack in the basalt that smells like death. It is abundantly clear that this structure does not belong here, that it is an aberration unaccounted for in the established history of the world [Two point Stability test at Difficulty four].

Overhead, Venus crawls its way across the night sky toward Regulus.

At this point the Black Drop Society, the Investigators and any remaining cultists will have their own agendas.

The Cultists

Surviving cultists, if any, will be on hand to disrupt the ritual. They will do this by any means at their disposal, including dynamiting the temple complex and dropping pillars on top of Investigators. Anything they can do to stop the Black Drop Society is fair game - they will resolutely avoid sacrificing themselves during the occultation, though. As Keeper, you should use surviving cultists (including any women who may have been «captured») to intensify the adventure's climax. If it is already intense enough, you don't need to throw them into the mix.

The Germans

If he gets the chance, Schneider will say a final awkward goodbye to his team (including, potentially, an Investigator-volunteer) and inject each of them with a sedative before putting on the Lemurian diadem.

Volunteering to be a victim of ritual suicide is momentous [Eight point Stability test at Difficulty four]. If Shaken, an Investigator will still undertake the ritual at the player's discetion, but it will be plain that the Investigator doesn't want to go through with it.

When the stars align, he will begin cutting the volunteer's throats. If the God of the Black Stone can be held in the temple for the minute or so until the occultation has passed, it will be trapped for another thirty years. The only thing that will hold it is murderous sacrifice in its name, and even that is but a nuisance - it senses Africa, India, a choking mass of people merely steps away. Witnessing this ritual carnage - particularly if complicit - is searing [Four point Difficulty four Stability test].

The players may not trust the Germans. If they want to stop the German ritual, that's definitely a fun choice. It won't end well, of course, but that's part of the game. If the ritual isn't performed, or fails outright, the God of the Black Stone will rise. The only way to put it down at this point will be to lure it into the ocean and ram it with the Tenerife, which is heartily encouraged.

The Arrival

The Emergence of the God of the Black Stone will vary depending on your mode of play.

[Pulp] Something tangible

A cold fog rolls in, thick as molasses. The pit belches forth a miasma of feculence, and the earth trembles. One of the six pillars grinds, buckles with an explosive pop, and falls. Something is working its way loose, a thing buried deep beneath the ground.

At first it appears to be made of earth - a huge, roiling mound of debris made animate by some unpardonable magic. But the scree sloughs off as it moves, and what appeared to be a mound merely describes the contours of the thing's misshapen head. It shakes - once, twice - and its true form appears. It is a mockery of a living thing, something that eschews symmetry and purpose in favor of violence and chaos. Blackened by years underground, sweet-smelling like rotting fruit. The terrible head turns and fixes on Schneider.

If the ritual is disrupted or fails, it's a fight! The God of the Black Stone will slaughter everyone if it can, drinking in their death energies.

The God of the Black Stone

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health N/A, Scuffling 20, Hit Threshold: 3 (large)

Alertness Modifier: +2, Stealth Modifier: -1
Weapon: +3 (cruel, lichen-covered limbs)

Upon witnessing the surfacing of the God of the Black Stone, the Investigators will be mentally vulnerable [Ten point Stability test at Difficulty five - If they are Shaken by this loss, they will lose 3 points of Sanity, too].

The God of the Black Stone will target whoever wears the diadem first, then anyone carrying Lemurian crystal, then the person with the highest Health. After any slaying in its presence it will pause - the briefest moment for an elephant seal, one combat round for a human being, two combat rounds for a *willing* human being, or four combat rounds for the «priest» wearing the diadem (this last will occur only once). If it remains within the confines of the temple - distracted by bloodletting or other violence - for ten combat rounds, the occultation will be over and it will be forced to return to its underground prison.

[Purist]Something Ineffable

The atmospheric pressure drops and ozone stings the Investigator's nostrils. There is a sensation of terrible disconnected-ness, of time racing by as if in a fever dream. The temple itself warps at hard, incalculable angles, bringing with it a screeching tinnitus, then springs back into a comfortingly normal configuration, then snaps again in a vomit-inducing whiplash of spacetime. A hard, wind-lashed rain begins to fall in sheets. Overhead, Regulus and Venus seem to collide, bright even through the downpour.

The God of the Black Stone forces its way through some terrible energetic fold released by the occultation. The high-pitched keening that accompanies it hovers at the threshold of hearing, seemingly composed of impossible chords; notes that don't correspond to frequency so much as some unspeakable wavelength of unalloyed emptiness. The God - if it is a God - is something huge and invisible - fat droplets of rain smash against an irregular surface and paint its upper half in a weird iridescence - a jagged sessile monolith, like a pile of glass in a demolished building, something so fundamentally inimical to life and reason that it is impossible to look upon without turning away. It radiates a rapacious hunger that is as obscene as it is terrifying, like a void that must be filled, a death-craving force as implacable as gravity.

If the ritual is disrupted or fails:

Then the rain stops, and there is nothing to fix the God of the Black Stone in space. The terrible sound continues for a moment and then fades. The thing is gone, unleashed upon the world and free.

When the Investigators return to civilization, their port or arrival should be utterly destroyed - an «Indian ocean cyclone» plowed through eight days earlier, killing a million people on two continents. And weather patterns have been changing all over the world…

Remember if you are playing in Purist mode and using the optional Big Reveal rules, the God may very well destroy an Investigator's Drive at some point.

Putting the monster down for another 30 years at the trap-rock tower of black basalt

If the ritual succeeds, the thing is driven back into its hell-hole. Schneider is irretrievably insane or dead, as are his sacrificial victims. Nothing remains but a hard journey back to Betsy Cove, where Ludwig Müller perhaps waits impatiently.

Ramming the God

Fleeing by sea guarantees an encounter with the Forgotten One deep in the southern ocean. Use the statistics provided above. If the Investigators want to ram the thing, the plucky Tenerife is up to the challenge. It is not, however, up to the aftermath. Use the deckplans of the Austral if positioning becomes important.

The God of the Black Stone, drawn toward human life and in urgent need of sustenance, will give chase. It isn't being especially stealthy, but between rough seas and thick fog, it may arrive unannounced. Spotting it early off the stern (Sense Trouble, restricted top those with Outdoorsman or Piloting and not manning the helm) will definitely afford an advantage.

If it is missed, the first sign of its presence will be the all-too-familiar stench of rotting fruit, followed by a vicious attack on an Investigator on deck. If no one is on deck, it will smash a hole in the pilothouse and strike at whoever is at the helm. It will need to be driven away from the Tenerife by some means before the captain can maneuver to ram it. A successful Piloting test can offer the Investigators some breathing room - a minute's worth, perhaps.

If spotted early, the ship's master can swing her around to meet the thing square across the bow.

Ramming will require another Piloting test. A decisive strike will send the thing deep into the abyss, stunned and perhaps (in pulp mode) dead. Anyone on deck at the time will be thrown into the ocean unless they can succeed in an Athletics test at difficuly 5. The shuddering blow will also snap the Tenerife's keel, breaking her effectively in two. A hasty S.O.S, Lifeboats and a return to the dark shores of the Kerguelens are the survivor's only hope. Any surviving cultists will be waiting.

The God of the Black Stone cannot be outsailed.

Non-Player Characters

All cultists can be run with the same general stats. Here are male and female versions, which a Keeper can adjust to taste:

Male Cultist

Athletics 8, Outdoorsman 6, Filch 2, Firearms 8, First Aid 2, Fleeing 8, Health 10, Sanity 5, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 2, Stability 0, Weapons 8

Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapons: Hunting rifle (+TK)
Shotgun (+TK)
Knife (–1)
Ice axe (de la Rue) (+0)

Female Cultist

Athletics 6, Outdoorsman 2, Filch 4, Firearms 4, Fleeing 8, Health 8, Scuffling 4, Sanity 6, Weapons 4, Sense Trouble 2, Stability 0

Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapons: .38 revolver (+1)
Kerosene lantern (TK), fire
Cleaver (+0)
Knife (-1)

Similarly, the Germans are all built of the same stuff - raise these scores for Faber and lower them for Schneider:

German Expedition Member

Athletics 4, Conceal 4, Piloting 2, Filch 4, Firearms 8, First Aid 2, Fleeing 6, Health 10, Sanity 8, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 6, Stability 8, Weapons 8, Personal Specialty 8

Weapons: Military rifle (Schneider) (+TK)
Sub-machinegun (Faber) (+TK)
Ice axe (+0)
knife (–1)

Edgar de la Rue

Edgar de la Rue is a geologist and explorer who has devoted most of his professional life to the Kerguelens - and the God of the Black Stone.

To portray Edgar de la Rue:
- Affix a tolerant smile to your face -an expert talking to laymen.
- Speak easily but with certainty.
- Cross your arms.

Andrée de la Rue

Andrée de la Rue, Edgar's wife and fellow cultist, is as ready for the first ascent of some unnamed sub-antarctic peak as she is for the first ascent of a surprised Investigator.

To portray Andrée de la Rue:
- Assume your conversation partner is trying to play a mild joke on you.
- Laugh easily and flirtatiously.
- Lean in toward the person you are speaking to.

Georges Le Galloudec

Georges le Galloudec is a comlete thrall of the God of the Black Stone. What remains of his rapidly disintegrating personality is violent and sociopathic in the extreme.

To portray Georges La Galloudec:
- Maintain an emotionless flat affect.
- Speak quietly when you speak at all.
- Don't make eye contact.

Léon Ménager

Not to be confused with his daughter Léone, Léon Ménager is the a bluff outdoorsman who is completely insane but, like his wife, remains quite stable. He wears an enormous sheepskin jacket and is prone to histrionic fits.

To portray Léon Ménager:
- Move your tongue around in your closed mouth as if searching for wedged bits of food.
- Speak in short, angry, barking phrases.
- Stab your finger at the person you are talking to.

Pamela Ménager

Pamela Ménager is the leader of the cult in the Kerguelens. Completely insane but highly stable, Pamela looks forward to adding her own blood to that spilled in the service of the divine. In the mean time she delights in cowing others and asserting her dominance.

To portray Pamela Ménager:
- Sit up straight and radiate confidence, intensity and power.
- Speak as though addressing an audience.
- Talk with your hands and illustrate your points physically.

Léone Ménager

Léone Ménager is young and lovely. having grown up among cultists and been subject to the unspeakable whims of the God of the Black Stone for many years, she is completely insane - but unlikeher mother, she retains some finesse and deceptive charm.

To portray Léone Ménager:
- Touch your face occasionally.
- Think carefully before you speak.
- When you do speak, speak with quiet self-assurance that belies your young age.

Claudette Petit

Claudette petit is a friendly, matronly woman. She's eager to please, very competent, quiet, and something of a

scold. When the cult strikes, she will be an early victim.

To portray Claudette Petit:
- Be good-natured and accommodating.
- Listen to every word with great care and concentration.
- Smooth your clothing compulsively.

Adèle Le Galloudec

Adèle Le Galloudec is a physical and mental wreck. The activities of the cult have broken her and she is adrift in her own sea of delusions. Adèle is unflinchingly obedient to Pamela.

To portray Adèle Le Galloudec:
- Be unsettled and birdlike in your gestures and movement.
- Breathe through your nose.
- Maintain intense eye contact.

Dr. Walter Schneider

Dr. Schneider is deeply sad about what is happening - both the ultimate goal of the Black Drop Society, but also that his carefully-wrought plans are unravelling before his eyes.

To portray Dr. Schneider:
- Speak in a melancholy German accent.
- Slouch in your chair.
- Occasionally rub your eyes or massage your temples.

Ludwig Müller

Ludwig Müller is the «kid», destined to survive and return in Schneider's role, and he finds the entire experience overwhelming. With the defection of Buschner, he's deeply terrified that he will be called upon to himself - something he won't do.

To portray Ludwig Müller :
- Speak in a very thick German accent and apologize for it.
- Glance around nervously for approval.
- Absently toy with a pencil.

Thomas Faber

Thomas Faber an old-line Nazi with a low Party membership number. An Unterstumbannfuher in the SS, Faber is the equivalent of a Lieutenant. He sees the ultimate outcome of the expedition as his duty, and he approaches it with a creepy zeal.

To portray Thomas Faber:
- Pointedly speak excellent Oxford English.
- Assume that your interlocutor is uncouth, unintelligent, or both.
- Adjust your uniform.

Ulrich Buschner

Ulrich Buschner is the the Black Drop Society expedition meteorologist, is huddled in the tent. When first encountered, he will be thunderously drunk and generally despondent. When sober, he will merely be despondent.

To Portray Ulrich Buschner:
- Itch.
- Speak in a broad, drawling German accent.
- Occasionally pause, look down, sigh heavily, and proceed.

Flashbacks

Play these as short vignettes that interrupt the action and provide some backstory. The Keeper can set them up like smash cuts in a film, moving the action suddenly to another time and place and then returning to the Kerguelen archipelago.

#1: The Black Drop Society

The grim staff of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin are not thrilled to assist a foreigner wandering in off the Opernplatz, where the scorch marks from SA book burnings are still visible. In the end their professionalism and curiousity (and the application of Bureaucracy or Flattery) overcome their reluctance, and they are able to track down several intriguing refrences to a Black Drop Society (schwarzen Tropfen Gesellschaft) dating back at least to 1874.

Library Use, Flattery, or Reassurance will allow an Investigator to discover that as secret societies go, the Black Drop is not very secret - its members seem largely unconcerned with revealing their affiliation - Baron von Schleinitz, who observed the transit of Venus from Betsy Cove in 1874, referred to it in his memoirs as a «somewhat melancholy gentleman's club of southern adventurers». The current President is Dr. Walter Schneider, who is probably the same W. Schneider who journeyed to the Kerguelens as part of the Drygalski expedition in 1903. The true purpose, scope and membership of the Black Drop Society remains a mystery.

A one-point spend in Library Use, Flattery, or Reassurance gains an Investigator a letter of introduction to the Prior of the Franziskaner Klosterkirche, where certain special collections have been hidden away,

among them the libarary's entire occult collection. This is a treasure trove - the Black Drop Society shows up in occult circles prior to 1874. The master of a Prussian seal-hunting vessel, the Clementina, is mentioned as a founding member, which dates the Society's interest in the Kerguelens back to at least the 1840s. The Society is strictly German.

A one-point Credit Rating spend will put the Investigator in touch with Erich von Drygalski, still spry in his seventies and teaching in Munich, commanded a large German expedition at the turn of the century and was persuaded to speak to the Investgator. He swears he has no connection, but that his man in the Kerguelens, Emil Worth, was definitely a member, as was Walter Schneider. Drygalski somehwat huffily calls it «a death cult» and hangs up.

#2: The Curious History of the Kerguelen Archipelago

In preparation for the long journey to the southern ocean, the Investigator has asked someone (a graduate student, a reporter, a bookish friend,a spouse) to look into that out-of-the-way corner of the world. The result is a neatly typed document (Handout #2: «A Precis on the Kerguelen Archipelago»), which the compiler will deliver with a tight smile.

Depending on the relationship, Reassurance, Intimidation, or Flattery will persuade them to hand over a second sheet (Handout #3: «Some Notes on Maritime Oddities in the Kerguelens»), with the sheepish admission that they knew what sort of things would interest the Investigator but didn't really want to admit it.

#3: Southern Ocean Glass

The curio shop in Mattapoisett, Massachussetts is stuffed with dusty relics from the heyday of commercial whaling. Just down the orad, the New Bedford whalers monopolized the south ocean trade and returned with all manner of treasures and curiosities. Many of the less obviously valuable wound up on shelves like these, between cracked daguerrotype negative plates and bound issues of St. Nicholas' magazine for children.

History or Art History reveal that when Kerguelen visited his eponymous archipelago in 1772, there was a fair amount of strange wreckage, in the form of crystal works of unknown function, still extant. His Lieutenant, Charles-Marc de Boisguehennuec, allegedly collected large amounts of elaborate crystal-work which has since been lost; de Boisguehennuec himself vanished during the Revolution. Whatever remained was collected as trinkets by the crews of New England whalers - Miskatonic University has the world's largest collection of «southern ocean glass» in their special collections. By 1820 the Kerguelens had been largely picked clean of artifacts and remnants. Only occasional tiny shards - like the ones found in New England curio shops - remain. Finding a shard would be a feather in the Investigator's cap.

The store owner is a taciturn old Yankee, who will rebuff any inquiries. Credit Rating or Reassurance will earn his attention, and he'll admit to having seen «a few queer bits of glass here and there» in his back room. A one-point Bargain, Flattery, or Reassurance spend will persuade him to produce a piece. It's a broken bit of a cylinder no bigger than a thumbnail, translucent and alternately blue or green in the light, quite beautiful. The old man will confide that «Plenty of people come looking for southern ocean glass, queer sorts of people from all over, and I'm very choosy about who I bring it out for. The people who collect southern ocean glass are not nice people. There was a French couple, for example, a very handsome couple, and they said they had found their own down in the islands, a pair of geologists, but they were looking for more that wasn't locked up in museums. Something about them was not very Christian and that's typical of those who come looking.»

He'll sell his shard for the right price, which he rightly senses ought to be high (See «Léon's Workshop above for the effects, should an Investigator have a shard with him).

COMPAGNIE GÉNÉRALE DES ÎLES KERGUELEN

Kerguelen's Island is a region of almost constant precipitation; only twenty-seven days out of four months being recorded as without snow or rain, and a still smaller number of nights. The thermometer ranged not far from the freezing-point; the daily average being a little below it in September and October, and a little above it in November and December. Whalers say that in midwinter there is no marked increase in the severity of the weather. The lowest thermometer recorded was 18° F., and the highest 64°. The island is also deservedly notorious for the violence of the gales, which almost constantly prevail, and which often arise with a suddenness that makes it very dangerous to go about in small boats.

These climatic conditions have their natural effect upon the flora and fauna of the island; there being neither tree nor shrub —no plant, indeed, taller than the Kerguelen cabbage, while the very few species of phaenogamous plants which do survive are such only as can thrive exposed to sudden and violent alternations of dryness and moisture and to fierce gales of wind. As a natural consequence of these facts, there are no land-birds or mammals, strictly speaking, indigenous to Kerguelen's Island, and but a single shore-bird, Chionis minor.

The island is of considerable size, about 90 miles long by 50 in width, and is composed, as to its southern part at least, wholly of volcanic rock, showing no signs of stratification. The northern portion contains stratified rocks, deposits of coal of little value, and very ancient remains of silicified wood, indicating the former existence of considerable trees, and the submergence and subsequent upheaval of the land upon which they grew. The whalers say that a large glacier runs across the island, in a generally east and west direction, at about its center. In the interior, the land is mountainous; peaks with sharp volcanic outlines alternating with table-topped hills. Mount Ross, the highest peak (about 5,000 feet), is always snow-covered and quite inaccessible. Near the sea, in December, the snow-line was found on Mount Crozier at about 2,600 feet above the sea-level.

No flying insects were observed excepting minute gnats, and a Tineid moth (which was perhaps imported), nor were the remains of any ever found in the stomach of any bird. Chionis and a teal were the only partial vegetable-feeders observed; all the other birds feeding exclusively on flesh, fish, or marine invertebrates.

- J. H. Kidder, The Natural History of Kerguelen Island, The American Naturalist, August 1876

LE HAVRE- RÉUNION - PORT COVREAUX

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to research this! What a strange place. Here are my initial notes.

-BR

1772

Yves-Joseph de Kerguelen-Trémarec discovers the islands that will later bear his name. He makes landfall, accompanied by the French naturalist Jean Guillaume Bruguière and Lieutenant Charles-Marc de Boisguehennuec. All three later destroy their journals, and Kerguelen himself spends time in prison upon his return to France for unspecified crimes during the voyage.

1874

Expeditions from the United States, Great Britain, and Germany establish bases from which to observe the transit of Venus. The Germans choose the best location, Betsy Cove, and built next to the old cemetery. The Americans choose Molloy Point. The HMS Challenger, scouting locations for a British base camp, sends men inland from Betsy Cove. The British base camp is eventually established at Observatory Bay. Additional observers are landed at Thumb Cove, Supply Bay, Palliser Point, and Christmas Harbor. Various expeditions - botanical, zoological, meteorological, geological - into Kurguelen's interior are made.

Now

After twenty years trying to build a profitable business on Kerguelen, the first and last settlers prepare to abandon the islands. The Compagnie Générale des Îles Kerguelen, founded by the brothers Henri and René Boissière, tried to raise sheep commercially. The harsh climate defeated their plans at Port Couvreux, only a few miles from Betsy Cove. Edgar de la Rue, a geologist, and his wife Andrée arrive aboard the MV Austral for an expedition to the interior, looking for exploitable minerals. They are sponsored by the French Ministry of Colonies.

The Austral will be loading what remains of the Compagnie Générale des Îles Kerguelen on board. You're very lucky to be aboard!

You specifically asked for "oddities" and, well, I am nothing if not thorough! Your wish is my commend. These Kerguelens certainly seem like a forbidding place.

1810

The American whaler Mary and Sally lands a seal-hunting party at the future site of Port Couvreux. James Kelly, her master, departs for the calving grounds. Upon his return, he finds no trace of the seal-hunting party and assumes that they were picked up by a friendly passing vessel. The men are never accounted for.

1844

A Prussian seal-hunting vessel, the Clementina, puts men ashore in Betsy Cove to set up a seal-hunting base. She is joined by a pair of American vessels out of Sag harbor and New London, the Oscar and the Garland. By the end of the seal-hunting season, the Oscar's crew has mutinied and the Garland is broken on the rocks. The seal camp will be used intermittently for many years. A cemetery is begun on the site of the Clementina's camp.

1903

The German Antarctic Expedition, led by Erich Dagobert von Drygalski, sets up a scientific camp at Betsy Cove, the old sealing site, before continuing to explore the Antarctic continent. The five-man Kurguelen team, under the command of Emil Worth, spends a year on the island. When Drygalski returns, the meteorologist Dr. Joseph Enzensperger - along with an unspecified number of Chinese laborers - are dead. The location of the graves is subsequently lost. Norwegians will later build a modern seal processing plant on the site.

That's what I dug up. Have a safe trip. Brr!

-Br

PERTURBATIONS OF THE PLANET VENUS
PAST & FUTURE

June 8 1772 Transit of venus

December 22, 1810 Venus occulted Xi-2 Sagittarii

January 3, 1818 Venus occulted Jupiter

July 11, 1825 Venus occulted Delta-1 Tauri

May 9, 1841 Venus occulted 17 Tauri

September 27, 1844 Venus occulated Eta Virginis

May 22, 1855 Venus occulted Epsilon Geminorum

December 9, 1874 Transit of Venus

December 6, 1882 Transit of Venus

December 9, 1903 Venus occulted Acrab

July 27, 1910 Venus occulted Eta Geminorum

- This week - Venus occults Regulus

October 25, [illegible] Venus occults Zuben-el-genubi

July 7, 1959, Venus occults Regulus

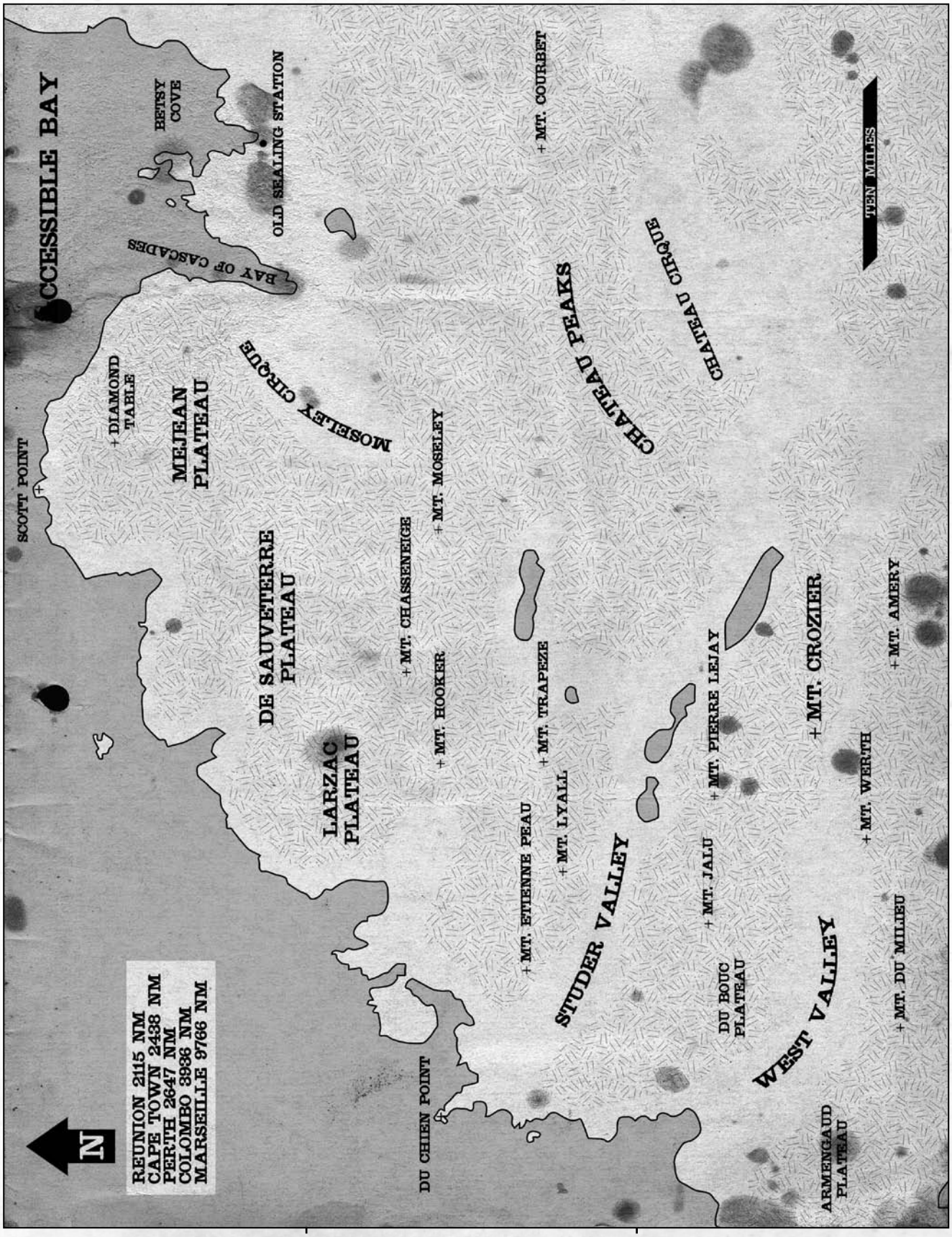
November 17, 1981 Venus occults Ninki

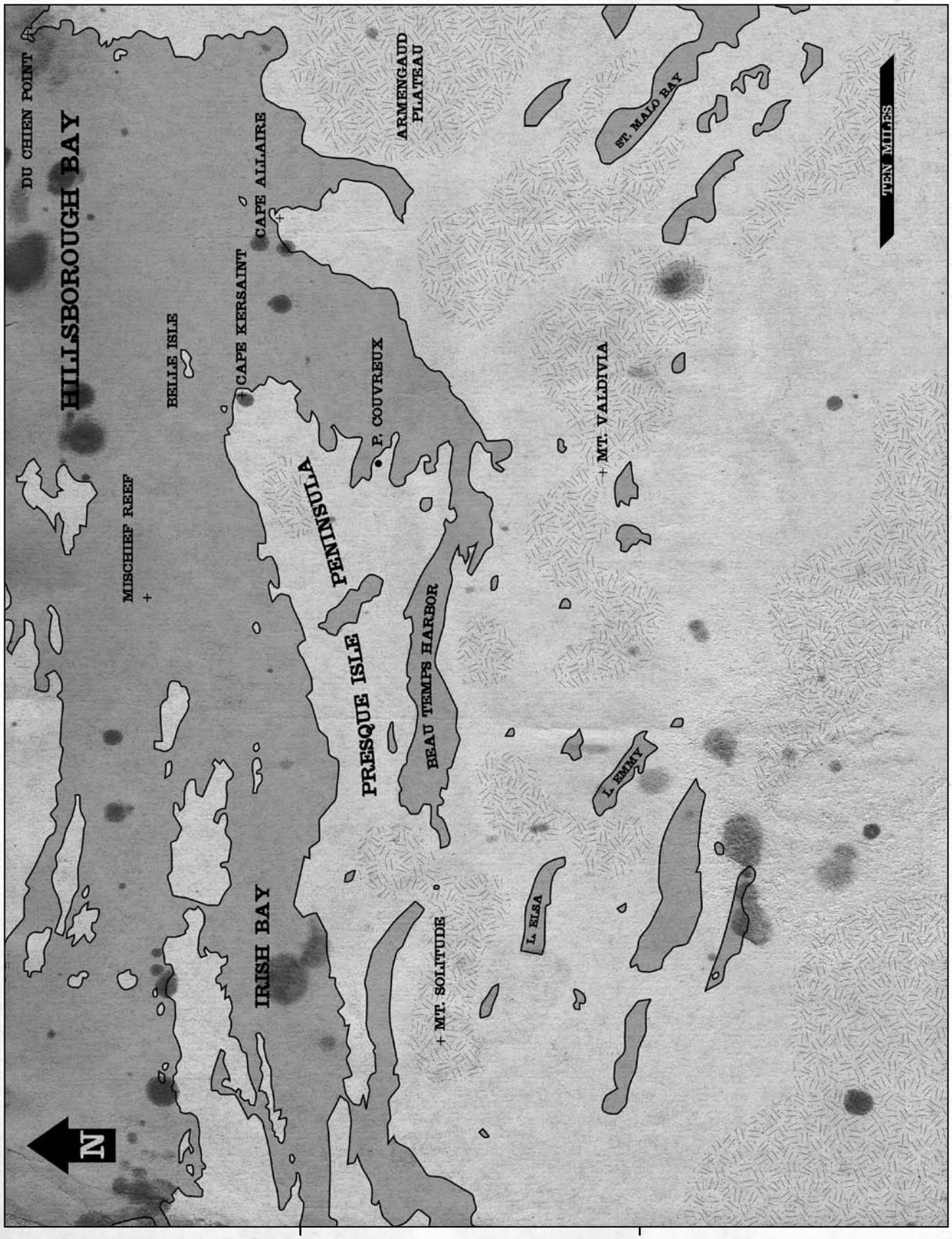
November 19, 1984 Venus occults Lambda Sagittarii

Grande 1000 Transit of Venus
Grand Trine ahead of them
Go help me go

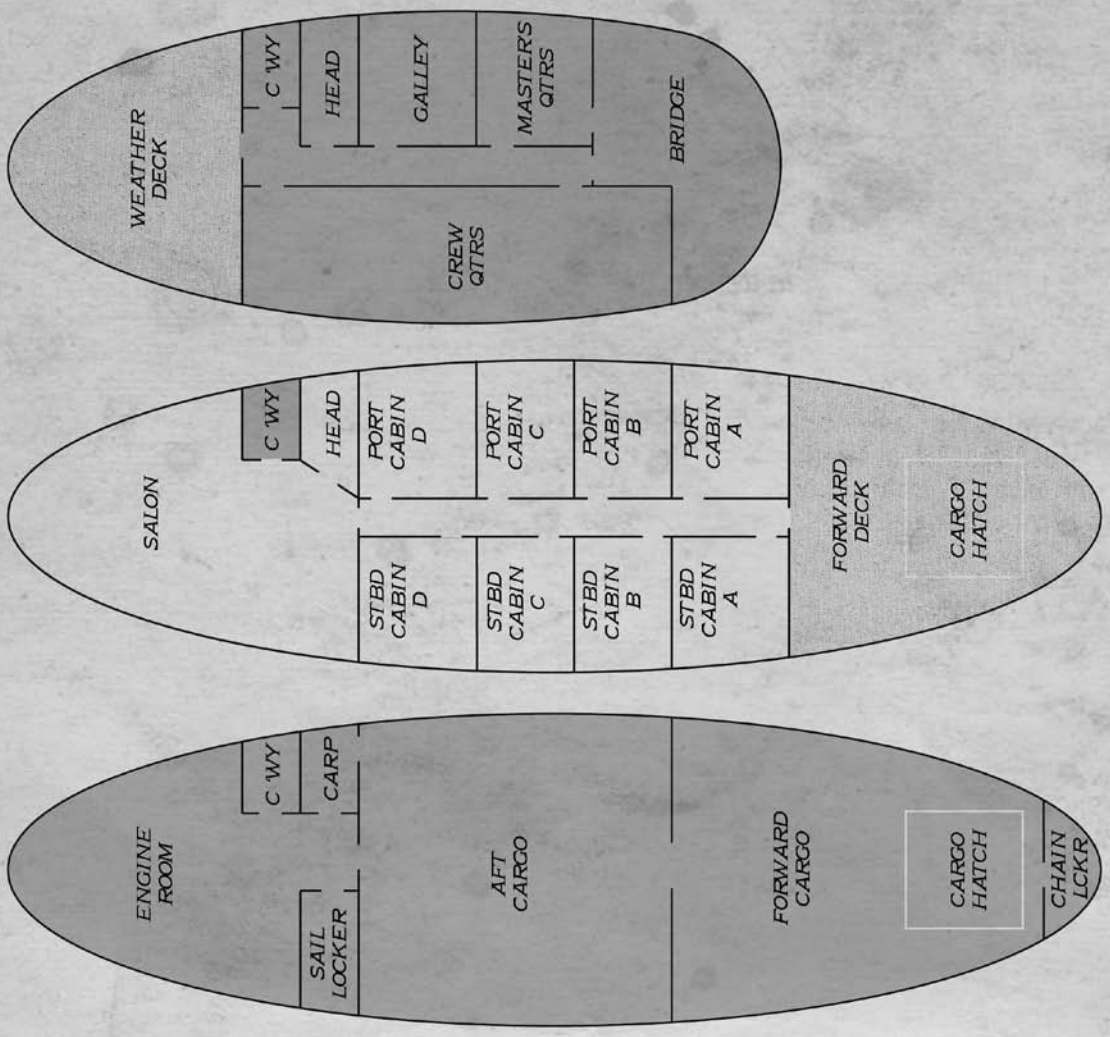
119

"A very interesting incident, although not directly related to its natural history, occurred in connection with one of these birds on December 17. On that day I scored one on the back of the head with a revolver-bullet so as to open the brain-cavity. It turned back-somersaults for twenty minutes without cessation, until I killed it, in fact. No matter what position it was put in, it immediately stretched out its legs and wings, and pushed itself over backward. Placed in the water, it endeavored to execute the same manoeuvre, and was near working itself out of reach from the shore. The specimen was injected with carbolic acid and preserved." The corresponding reflect, that resulting from a wound of the cerebrum only, was at another time illustrated in a gull (see Larux), and both incidents recalled strikingly Dr. Weir Mitchell's interesting experiments, performed some ten years ago upon pig..."


CCESSIBLE BAY
SCOTT POINT
+ DIAMOND TABLE
MEJEAN PLATEAU
BAY OF CASCADES
BETSY COVE
OLD SEALING STATION
MOSELEY CIRQUE
+ MT. COURBET
CHATEAU PEAKS
CHATEAU CIRQUE
DE SAUVETERRE PLATEAU
+ MT. CHASSENEIGE
+ MT. MOSELEY
+ MT. HOOKER
LARZAC PLATEAU
+ MT. ETIENNE PEAU
+ MT. TRAPEZE
+ MT. LYALL
STUDER VALLEY
+ MT. JALU
+ MT. PIERRE LEJAY
+ MT. CROZIER
DU BOUC PLATEAU
WEST VALLEY
+ MT. WERTH
+ MT. AMERY
ARMENGAUD PLATEAU
+ MT. DU MILIEU
DU CHIEN POINT
N
REUNION 2115 NM
CAPE TOWN 2438 NM
PERTH 2647 NM
COLOMBO 3936 NM
MARSEILLE 9766 NM
TEN MILES


DU CHIEN POINT
HILLSBOROUGH BAY
MISCHIEF REEF
BELLE ISLE
CAPE KERSAINT
CAPE ALLAIRE
ARMENGAUD PLATEAU
ST. MALO BAY
P. COUVREUX
PENINSULA
PRESQUE ISLE
BEAU TEMPS HARBOR
MT. VALDIVIA
IRISH BAY
MT. SOLITUDE
L. ELSA
L. EMMY
N
TEN MILES

MV AUSTRAL



Capacity: 16 passengers and 6 crew
Accommodation: 8 double cabins with shared head and shower
Length: 78 feet
Beam: 18 feet
Draft: 9 feet 6 inches
Speed: 8 knots
Range: 6000 nautical miles
Sails: Fore-and-aft rigging

Crew: Master, first mate, engineer, cook, and 2 sailors
Power: Twin triple-expansion steam engine, generator of 21 KW
Communication: Siemens and Halske VHF omnidirectional radio
Ship-to-shore: Tender with outboard motor
Emergency: 3 life boats accessible from weather deck
Water: 1,500 gallons and water maker

I have by the grace of a merciful God survived this calamity. Carr and his crew aboard the Shaw Perkins, save me were dashed on the rocks of Point Farmen in the first week of May 1841. I thank God for my good fortune.

Shot some seals for food and dressed them. Feeling fine. Traveling east.

Traveling east over difficult country. Found a piece of quartz, very lovely I shall give it to my Jeanette as a keepsake God willing.

Green again and miserable heather swamp. Hurt my foot on a jagged rock, may such rocks be cursed in the reechy bowels of hell. Would that my ordeal were quickly ended.

Pressing on, achieved north coast. Evidence of sealing parties. Resolved to cross the low peaks west of Mt. Crozier to reach Morbihan Bay.

Clear night. Venus is high over a bright star passing strange.

Mountains. Today I have found shelter in a cave against a howling gale. Foot bad.

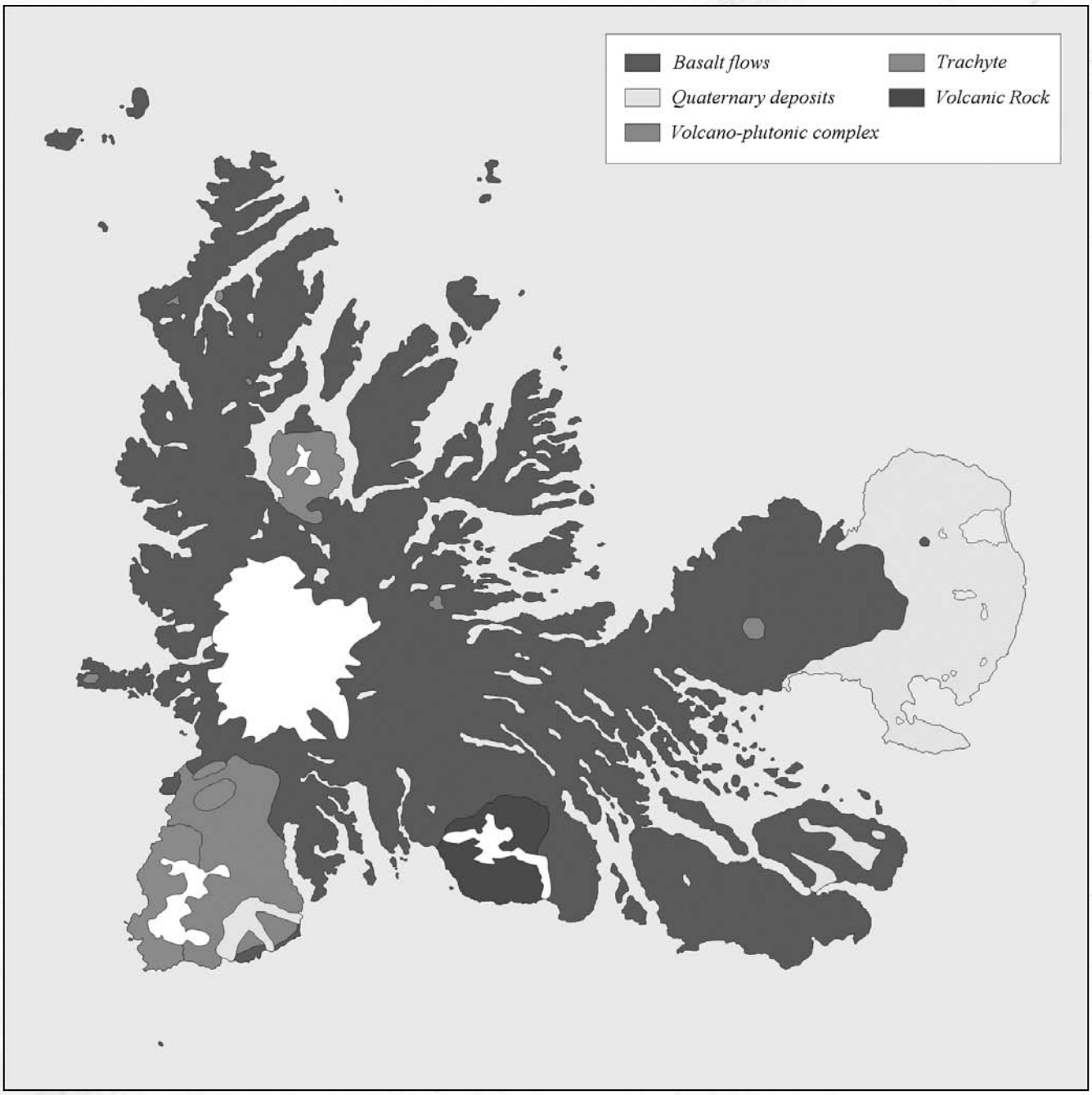
In searching for some of the cabbage hereabouts I came upon a great building in the Hindoo mode beneath I believe Mt. Lyell and a great many scattered crystals of quartz etc. Before it is a terrible stone and I felt the presence of the very devil. May God protect me I felt such fear. I am no longer certain of my wits but I am resolved to press on to the sealing camps of M. Bay. Foot is worse.

I cannot leave this place. Foot very bad and a fever. Such dreams.

O there is a hell May my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ greet me in heaven I have led a dissolute life

Jeanette J

0
(km)
100
0
(mi)
60
Projection UTM - WGS84 datum
1500 m
1250 m
1000 m
900 m
800 m
700 m
600 m
500 m
400 m
300 m
200 m
100 m
50 m
0 m
-100 m
-200 m
-300 m
-400 m
OCÉAN INDIEN
Péninsule Loranchet
Péninsule Courbet
Péninsule Rallier du Baty
Péninsule Gallieni
Presqu'île Joffre
Presqu'île Jeanne d'Arc
Presqu'île Ronarc'h
Île Foch
Île Longue
Île du Port
Île du Prince de Monaco
CALOTTE GLACIAIRE COOK
Golfe Choiseul
Golfe des Baleiniers
Golfe du Morbihan
Baie Rocheuse
Baie Rhodes
Baie du Hillsborough
Baie Accessible
Baie du Noroît
Baie Bretonne
Baie Norvégienne
Baie d'Audierne
Passe de la Résolution
Passe Royale
Plateau Central du Plateau Armengaud
Plaine Ampère
Îles Nuageuses
Îles Leygues
Îles Davis
Îles Dayman
Îles Ternay
Îles de Boynes
Île du Roland
Île de Castries
Île Howe
Île Mac Murdo
Île Sibbald
Île Bethell
Île Maroon
Île Violette
Île Bellouard
Île aux Skuas
Île du Passage
Île de l'Ouest
Île Ronde
Île Gaby
Île Altarin
Île Inskip
Île Suhm
Île Murrey
Île Verte
Île Haute
Île Australia
Île Richard-Foy
Île Léon Lefèvre
Île Saint-Louis
Île Saint-Lambe Dauphine
Île Chugny
Île de Croÿ
Île d'Après
Île Sud
Île Larose
Île Joubin
Île Jeanne d'Arc
Île Blakeney
Île Molène
Île Ouessant
Île de l'Antarès
Île Cheminière
Île Cochons
Île aux Moules
Île Australia
Île Morgan
Île Longue
Île Richard-Foy
Île Léon Lefèvre
Île Saint-Louis
Île Saint-Lambe Dauphine



Map created by Rémi Kaupp

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Pre-Generated Investigators

You are ANITA.

Your drive is CURIOSITY.

Choose which character you are married to.

You met in school - in fact, you dropped out of University to marry him. Not a bad move, considering the path both your careers have taken. He's a good man, although you aren't the perfect match you once were. The marriage is fraying.

You are a writer. Your first (and only) published book, *Curse of the Taino,* was a modest success and fueled your nascent interest in the occult. Recently you've been devouring what little information you can find about the mysterious Kerguelen archipelago, and smell another novel in it.

Occupation: Author

Sources of Stability:
- Yuisa, Taino medicine woman.
- Heinrich Schiffer, your on-again off-again friend and lover.

Pillars of sanity:
- Life should be lived to the fullest.
- We can understand anything if we try hard enough.

Investigative skills:
Anthropology 1, Architecture 1, History 4, Languages 2, Library Use 2, Assess Honesty 4, Credit Rating 2, Oral History 2, Reassurance 1, Streetwise 1, Art 2, Evidence Collection 1, Outdoorsman 2

General skills:
Athletics 8, Health 9, Sense Trouble 6, Preparedness 4, Stability 8, Conceal 4, Disguise 4, Riding 4, Sanity 8, Shadowing 8, Stealth 6, Weapons 2,

You are MARC-DAVID DESMARAIS.

Your drive is THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE.

You are the French magistrate overseeing the evacuation of Port Couvreux, and you couldn't be happier. A very wealthy man is allowed an all-consuming passion, and yours is astronomy. You've been fascinated with the 1874 transit of Venus your whole life, and have visited all the observation stations - Tehran, Tasmania, Kyoto - except one. The German observatory in the Kerguelen archipelago at Betsy Cove is pretty damn remote, but it'll be a real feather in your cap. While you're there you'll make certain measurements that confirm (surely not deny) a thesis of yours concerning the misalignment of the 1876 telescope, and maybe climb Mt. Crozier. Just, you know, to say you've done it.

Maurice Lavalle is your deputy.

This Lederman character - nose in a book, always thinking - isn't your cup of tea at all. The fact that he's Jewish has *nothing* to do with it, not at all.

Sources of Stability:
- Dorothy Desmarais, your beautiful little girl
- Professor Heddington, Emeritus Professor of Astronomy at King's College, London

Pillars of Sanity:
- Some people are bred better than others.
- One day, humanity will conquer the stars.
- People are, at their core, good and moral beings.

Investigative skills:
Languages 1, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 4, Flattery 6, Intimidation 1, Reassurance 2, Accounting 1, Astronomy 6, Evidence Collection 1

General skills:
Athletics 8, Fleeing 8, Health 8, Sense Trouble 6, Scuffling 4, Stability 8, Conceal 4, Firearms 4, First Aid 2, Riding 6, Sanity 10, Stealth 2, Weapons 4

You are DR. JEAN WAECHTER.

Your drive is ARROGANCE.

You are the contract physician hired to oversee the welfare of the Port Couvreux evacuees. Work is a little thin on the ground, especially for an Alsace doctor with a German surname. Your French board certification is «pending review» after the incident with the Jewish protesters and *Le Faisceau*, of which you are a proud supporter, and if that goes the wrong way (it won't; you didn't do anything wrong) no hospital wants you on their staff. So it's a waiting game, but you've got mouths to feed, so you signed on as «expédition médecin» with the French South Atlantic something-or-other, to go render aid to a collapsing colony in the southern ocean. Interesting job, and a perfect way to wait for things to cool down at home. What will you see down there? What manner of scrofulous diseases have afflicted the sheep farmers? Fascinating stuff.

The American soldier, Carlisle Bullard, strikes you as a dangerous half-wit.

Sources of Stability:
- Maude Weachter, your wife.
- Georges Valois, leader of the *Le Faisceau* movement
- Thomas Faber, an SS-man you met through *Le Faisceau*, who intimated he was also «heading for the southern islands».

Pillars of Sanity:
- First do no harm.
- The Teutonic destiny is to rule.

Investigative skills:
Biology 4, Languages 4, Medicine 10, Intimidation 1, Reassurance 2, Accounting 4, Forensics 4, Pharmacy 2

General skills:
Athletics 9, Fleeing 2, Health 10, Sense Trouble 3, Preparedness 4, Scuffling 6, Stability 8, Disguise 2, First Aid 10, Piloting 4, Sanity 8, Stealth 4, Weapons 6

You are LIEUTENANT CARLISLE BULLARD.

Your Drive is DUTY.

You're on vacation.

The United States Army Signal Corps realized you had been working way too hard and gave you some leave and a free steamship ticket. Kerguelen archipelago, exotic, pretty nice of them. Thoughtful even. They told you to pack a few things - some geodetic survey instruments for sounding the big harbors, a large format camera, a German phrasebook. Could a deep draft warship anchor on the north side of the Kerguelens? Use it as a base to harass Atlantic shipping in the coming war? Hitler seems to think so - he's sent a little expedition down to sniff around, anyway. Maybe he sent a French doctor and sympathizer along on the very same boat you're taking. Might pay to keep an eye on that guy, Waechter.

But then again what do you care, right? *You're on vacation.*

Sources of Stability:
- Florence Bullard, your mother.
- Colonel Donovan, your superior officer.
- Will Moxley, your illegitimate son.

Pillars of Sanity:

- I can rely on my moral compass to guide me.
- In the end you can always rely on nature to sort things out.

Investigative skills:
Geology 2, History 2, Languages 1, Flattery 1, Intimidation 6, Evidence Collection 2, Interrogation 1, Outdoorsman 6

General skills:
Athletics 16, Driving 2, Fleeing 8, Health 12, Sense Trouble 8, Preparedness 2, Scuffling 6, Stability 9, Explosives 6, Firearms 8, Mechanical Repair 4, Sanity 8, Weapons 6

You are PROFESSOR IRVING LEDERMAN

Your drive is SCHOLARSHIP.

You were a German academic and a modest authority on the exploration of the Atlantic before the Nazis came to power.

Now you are a British academic and most of your family is still trapped in Hitler's Germany. Some of them are toughing it out, convinced it will get better. Some of them are not so naïve.

When the chance came to visit the Kerguelens, site of so much important maritime history during the last century, you jumped at it. You've corresponded with the colonists and feel like you know them. In truth, getting away from Europe - even for a few months - was also welcome respite. But your true goal is pure research - you need to see the place, feel it, touch the artifacts of the whalers, confirm certain hypotheses about the seal-rendering trade.

You actively dislike Dr. Waechter, who is a Nazi sympathizer of the worst sort.

Sources of Stability:
- Rivka Lederman, your sister.
- Dr. James Munsie, your department chair at King's College, London.
- Léon Ménager, a colonist you've corresponded with and befriended.

Pillars of Sanity:
- Human beings have inherent dignity and worth.
- Only rationality can advance our knowledge.

Investigative skills:
Anthropology 2, Archaeology 2, History 3, Languages 4, Library Use 4, Occult Studies 2, Bureaucracy 2, Reassurance 2

General skills:
Athletics 4, Fleeing 8, Health 8, Sense Trouble 8, Preparedness 5, Scuffling 4, Stability 10, Conceal 4, Firearms 2, Piloting 2, Sanity 6, Shadowing 2, Stealth 6, Weapons 4

You are MAURICE LAVALLE

Your drive is IN THE BLOOD.

Your aunt Claudette lives in Port Couvreux, and you'll see her safely home, but you have other reasons for making this wretched journey. You are Provost to the Magistrate, Marc-David Desmarais, and like him you have ulterior motives for volunteering for the mission. Your father was a collector, and rich. You are merely a collector. The money is all gone, pissed away, and instead of working for yourself and your legacy, you work for others. Plutocrats too busy or too fat to travel the world in search of the unusual, the singular, the blasphemous. Now you are en route to the most remote corner of the much-diminished French empire, a gravy stain on the map of the southern ocean, to collect - what? Hopefully half-rotted documents claiming sovereignty from Captain Cook, from Kerguelen himself. Other things? Who knows. You need to find enough interesting garbage to finance the whole wretched trip, possibly pull your family out of debt with one spectacular discovery.

Marc-David Desmarais is your boss.

Dr. Lederman reminds you of your wealthy patrons, and you hate him for it.

Sources of Stability:
- Marie Lavalle, your wife.
- Claudette Petit, your cousin, one of the colonists.

Pillars of Sanity:
- My family is the root of my strength.
- I trust in the benevolent Christian God.

Investigative skills:
Architecture 2, Art History 6, History 6, Languages 4, Law 4, Library Use 2, Bargain 2, Flattery 1, Evidence Collection 1

General skills:
Athletics 10, Fleeing 10, Health 8, Sense Trouble 4, Scuffling 2, Stability 8, Conceal 2, Disguise 2, First Aid 4, Mechanical Repair 2, Piloting 2, Sanity 8, Shadowing 2, Stealth 6, Weapons 1

The Big Hoodoo

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Notes on The Big Hoodoo

By Bill White

I designed two of the adventures in this compilation. The first, is *The Big Hoodoo*. The second, *Castle Bravo*, is set aboard an aircraft carrier in the South Pacific during nuclear bomb testing at Bikini Atoll. Its appeal is, I think, straightforward: an atomic bomb goes off and the PCs, as the naval and scientific personnel involved, must deal with monstrous emergences in its aftermath. It is very high concept, intended to evoke the atomic horror movie genre of the 1950s, with its fever-dream fears of radioactive Commie mutant monster invasion, producing an adventure where a slow ramping-up of paranoia and things-aren't-quite-right-here suspicion comes to a violent climax of military action.

But I want to use the space that I've been given to talk about the other adventure I designed. Now, *The Big Hoodoo* is not really high concept the way *Castle Bravo* is. So when I tell potential players that it's about science fiction writers in 1950s California investigating the death of their friend the occult-loving rocket scientist Jack Parsons, only a few people get really excited—far fewer than with *Castle Bravo*, which sold itself.

Nonetheless, really excited those few do get, because Jack Parsons is catnip for a certain kind of historically minded Lovecraftian role-player. A few words of explanation will get across why.

Strange Angel

At this point, you may be asking, "Who is Jack Parsons?" Jack Parsons is an unsung hero of the American space program, a self-taught chemist and explosives expert who as a teenager was building and test-firing rockets along a dry riverbed outside of Pasadena where today NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory is located; Parsons helped institute JPL. During World War II, Parsons and his colleagues—a ragtag group who called themselves the Suicide Squad—designed, tested, and built jet-assisted takeoff (JATO) rockets for the U.S. military to enable heavily laden aircraft to boost themselves airborne off of short runways on captured islands in the Pacific.

It shouldn't be surprising that a young man who was interested in chemistry and rockets in the middle of the Twentieth Century was also an active science fiction fan. During the late Thirties and early Forties, Parsons would show up at the meetings of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, through which he met such sci-fi luminaries as Ray Bradbury, Forrest J. Ackerman, and Jack Williamson as well as Robert Heinlein.

But what may in fact be at least a little surprising is that besides being a rocket scientist and a science fiction fan, Parsons was also a magician. He devoured the writings of British occultist Aleister Crowley, and eventually he and his wife joined the California chapter of Crowley's pagan sect, the "Agape Lodge" of the Ordo Templi Orientis or OTO, and began to practice the Gnostic religious devotion that Crowley had named "Thelema" (Greek for "Will"). He attempted magical "workings" using the formulae Crowley reconstructed from the writings of Dr. John Dee, the Elizabethan scholar who lectured in mathematics and sought the secrets of the angels.

Eventually, Parsons would become a leader of the Agape Lodge, albeit not a terribly successful one. The Pasadena mansion he inherited from his father—whom his mother had kicked out of the house for philandering when Jack was a boy—was turned into a bohemian apartment building whimsically called "the Parsonage" and used to host OTO ceremonies and wild parties where Parsons would drunkenly recite ecstatic poetry in praise of the god Pan. There are Pasadena police report files investigating complaints about a naked pregnant woman jumping through a ring of fire at one such affair and other lewdness.

Now, after the war, things started to fall apart for Parsons. His wife Helen left him for the former head of the Agape Lodge, a British expatriate named Wilfred Smith, after Jack started sleeping with Helen's kid sister Sara. Then L. Ron Hubbard, with a smirk on his face, a lie on his lips, and larceny in his heart, showed up at the Parsonage—possibly because Bob Heinlein's then-wife Leslyn thought he was a creep and wouldn't let him stay with them. But Hubbard impressed Parsons—no good judge of character he—who recruited him to be his magical partner. Hubbard impressed Sara, too, who left Jack's bed for Ron's. Parsons gritted his teeth and got on with "the Babalon Working," an act of ceremonial magic intended to conjure an elemental goddess-muse in human form who would be instrumental in the further creation of a "Moon-Child"—this being a kind of Thelemite messiah who would bring about a new age of anarchical freedom. After several weeks and a final ceremony in the Mojave Desert, Jack thought that the arrival on his doorstep of a blue-eyed, red-haired former Navy WAVE and budding avant-

garde artist named Marjorie Cameron betokened the success of the first part of the Babalon Working. *"I have my elemental!"* he told Crowley in a report, claiming that he and Hubbard had done it. From London, Crowley could only fume, *"I get fairly frantic when I contemplate the idiocy of these louts."*

While Parsons was attempting to conjure the Moon Child via acts of sex magic with Marjorie, Hubbard and Sara absconded wit h $20,000 of Jack's money that they were supposed to be using to buy boats in Florida and sail them back to California to sell at a profit. Parsons tracked them to a marina in Florida and, when they attempted to sail off, conjured up a storm to bring them back to port. Only slightly abashed, Hubbard gave back what little was left of the money but kept the girl (they would later divorce). He then headed off to bring the world first Dianetics, billed as a self-help science of mental health, and then later Scientology (which, though based on Dianetics, also encompassed a quasi-religious spirituality and a secret sci-fi cosmology involving ancient space tyrants and imprisoned alien souls that Hubbard called "the Space Opera").

Meanwhile, Parsons returned to California and found himself under investigation as the result of FBI suspicions about his loyalty in the new Cold War era amid accusations of careless handling of sensitive documents. Financially strapped and unable to find work as a scientist in the burgeoning but security-conscious aerospace industry, he lost the mansion his father had left him and had to work as a pyrotechnician for the movie business. He and Marjorie fought, reconciled, and fought some more. After a final reconciliation, they planned a trip to Mexico together. On the day they were supposed to leave, Parsons went into his garage laboratory in the early afternoon to mix up a batch of chemicals for a customer. There was an explosion, and Jack's mangled body was rushed to the hospital where he died some hours later.

Es Lasst Sich Nicht Spielen?

Ultimately, regardless of historical resonance, the value of an adventure is that it can be run as an adventure. If, to paraphrase Edgar Allen Poe, "it does not permit itself to be played," then—homage or no homage—in the end "The Big Hoodoo" would be a waste of time. Fortunately, the game is eminently playable.

That's not to say that it doesn't require the Keeper to be on his or her toes, because it does. Having run "The Big Hoodoo" a few more times since its publication, albeit in four-hour convention slots, I'm prepared to offer a few words of guidance on running the adventure.

First, remember that the pre-generated characters are not in fact typical Trail of Cthulhu "investigators." Each character's Drive and capsule biography is supposed to work together to provide the impetus for that character to want to find out more about what's going on among Jack Parsons' intimates in the wake of his death: Bob and Tony want to work it into their fiction, Ginny thinks it's an exciting part of her husband's (and now her own) life, and Phil Dick is under pressure from the Feds to play informer. In my experience, those are usually enough to give the players the information they need to know how to push their characters to act. However, you may have call their attention to this material and allow the players to get oriented to their characters and to each other. You can do that out-of-character, going around the table to have the players introduce their characters and summarize their connections to each other, or in-character, by having a short directed scene that takes place in the car ride down to the funeral home where the adventure proper begins. The newspaper article about Jack's death (Handout #1) and the map of the greater Los Angeles area (Handout #2) should figure in to this prefatory orienting play.

The First Scene

The action then begins with the characters' arrival at the funeral home, where they (1) meet Forrie Ackerman in the parking lot and probably peg him as a harmless nuisance, (2) see Ed Forman (grieving best friend) and Professor von Karman (eccentric scientist) have a brief exchange, and (3) enter the mourning chapel proper, where they immediately see Marjorie Cameron (shaken widow), her brother Robert (put-upon relative), Jane Wolfe (occult diva), and Leslyn Heinlein (bitter drunk) as well as Helen Smith (enigmatic matron) and her son Kwen (otherworldly child). Later, Omar Garrison (nosy reporter) will show up and try to get a juicy quote from someone. This is a huge cast, and they will mainly be interested in talking about people who are not present in the scene, rather than each other. Complicated!

The trick is to stage-manage the scene so that NPCs brush up against the PCs briefly, intimate their knowledge, and then exit: they run off distraught, are picked up for questioning by the Feds or the police, sequester themselves somewhere (the bathroom, a car), or simply claim to be required elsewhere. If an investigator is really interested in talking to someone (Jane Wolfe is often the object of such PC interest), then allow it, but don't overload the PCs; it is possible for this first scene to be too busy.

To avoid that, you may wish to keep Omar Garrison and Helen Smith in

reserve until later, especially if the PCs make a connection with either Marjorie (and are ready to head for the big hoodoo in the desert) or with Jane Wolfe (and get invited to the Church of Thelema through her). They are best brought fully on-stage if there are PCs who need someone with whom to interact. Players have tended to be hostile to Garrison (media vulture! they correctly surmise) and leery of Helen Smith (another hostile divorcee like Leslyn, maybe they erroneously imagine).

Additionally, be prepared to end the scene without any PCs headed either for the desert with Marjorie or the Church of Thelema that evening. As long as the people they've met can reach them at their hotel, they can be brought into the next stage of the adventure—maybe Marjorie goes missing in the night, and her brother wants the PCs to help him find her because he saw her disappear. Or maybe Helen Smith wants them to find Vance Wimpole and convince him to let Betty and her daughter go, because the police won't get involved in domestic squabbles. This would actually work fine; the investigation then centers on what happened last night? and leads pretty naturally to Vance Wimpole.

Drive in the Desert

Players find the scene in the desert creepily effective, especially when one of them has taken a jolt of space mead and is tripping in the Mojave as Marjorie's magician. Remember that the investigator's access to Marjorie's car—in which a few clues are present—will probably be only fleeting and temporary, so do your best to call those clues to an investigator's attention when you get the chance.

The most difficult part in running this scene may be incorporating the neo-Enochian magic mechanics with the playing out of the action in the scene. You may want to practice giving the in-game explanation from the appendix of how "magick" works in Marjorie's spaced-out voice ("*You are the magician! Concentrate on the key! Exert your will!*") while OOC directing the magician-player to roll the first of the three d6 rolls he or she needs, with Marjorie interpreting the result (success: *"The spirits are listening, continue!"*; failure: *"The spirits heed you not!"*). Then roll for the key's Inertia, narrating what Marjorie says as a result (success: *"The spirits are strong, maybe too strong!"*; failure: *"You have bent the spirits to your will, but they continue to resist!"*), continuing until you get a final result: either (1) the magician calls up spirits who are bound [magician succeeds, spirits fail], (2) the magician calls up rebellious spirits [magician succeeds, spirits succeed], (3) the magician has failed to control the spirits, but their ability to act is limited [magician fails, spirits fail], or (4) the magician has totally failed, leaving the spirits free to act as they desire [magician fails, spirits succeed].

No matter what happens, it's a lot of fun to have the magician-player be possessed by the ghost of Jack Parsons, so it's worth spending some time worrying about how to stage it. One way might be to put parts of Jack's ghostly speech on a set of index cards (Card 1: *"It is cold . . . the Babalon Working!"* Card 2: *"O Babalon! . . . 'Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li'!"* Card 3: *"Oh, he is a foulness! . . . at whim!"* Card 4: *"But he knows not . . . if he should find her!"* Card 5: *"It is dark here . . . he has grown strong.*") Then, whether the magic succeeds or fails, the spirit comes upon the magician and he gets the first card. Tell him he has to act it out with feeling. Maybe allow a magician who wants to "fight off the possessing spirit" to make a Stability test; otherwise, give him another card if he is willing "to let the spirit move him."

Try to integrate the phantasmagoric side effect of being pursued through a dark labyrinth by unseen hunters into the scene; strictly speaking, the only time they shouldn't happen is if the magician makes his rolls but the spirits fail theirs, though at your option Marjorie can be affected. If both the magician and the spirits fail their rolls, the side effect only happens to the magician (and Marjorie); if the magician fails but the spirits don't, it happens to everyone present in the scene. For each round spent fleeing through the dark labyrinth, give the magician another card to act out in addition to making the Athletics/Fleeing checks that are called for. Everyone hears the magician, and anyone not affected by the "magick" sees him and Marjorie darting in and out among the circle of hoodoo stones, seemingly in terror; at some point, they lose sight of Marjorie and she vanishes—which realization prompts tests of Stability for the witnesses.

Later, if there's time, the magician may be given cause to worry that the possession has lasting consequences; you can for example give the character an urge to visit the Aerojet Corporation, the Arroyo Seco, 1071 South Orange Grove Avenue, or anywhere else associated with Jack Parsons.

While this craziness is going on, Forrie Ackerman should in most cases try to steal Jack's ashes if he hasn't already. If he gets away, consider having him leave his copy of Psychohistory behind for the PCs to find. If he doesn't, definitely have it fall out of his pocket during the struggle so that they can leverage its contents in their interrogation, and Forrie can try to be stoically loyal like a good Psychohistorian rather than giving up his clues too easily.

The Church of Thelema

The scene in the "church" runs well enough as written; players usually want to talk to Betty and ignore the

Thelemites, but Betty should be standoffish—"*Buzz off, creep,"* is a good response for her to use against an investigator's conversational gambit—so use Jane Wolfe or another Thelemite to give them the skinny on her. Interrupt the conversation by having it be time for the ceremony. Since this scene usually takes place after the scene in the desert (which most PCs will have attended; "don't split the party!" is already a TOC truism), the recurrence of the words of the Priest and the Priestess in the Thelemite memorial is a good time to ask for a small Stability test for anyone who witnessed both—but the exact details of the ceremony can be glossed over, mere scene-setting in preparation for the dust-up with Wimpole's three goons, which will probably come as a relief after the shadow-boxing quality of the encounter in the desert.

Nonetheless, make the PCs work hard for a victory; the Psychohistorian goons should be tough, brutal, and ruthless. They will pull out knives and guns while the investigators are still trying to be reasonable. Describe the goons performing incredible acts of Psychohistory-enabled martial artistry in order to cause a Stability test, but don't let them be invincible. In the aftermath of the fight, Wilfred Smith can possibly use some neo-Enochian mumbo-jumbo to heal them or otherwise refresh a few of their pools if they agree to help out on Smith's terms.

Note that if you are playing a multi-session or open-ended game, this is a good place to call for a break. Additionally, you may choose to forego the heavy-handed Psychohistorian intrusion and develop the action more slowly, using the Thelemite service as a purely investigative opportunity that lets the PCs develop Wilfred Smith as an important contact. Have Betty's kidnapping occur off-screen later, and let this be the motivation for Helen Smith to contact the investigators to point them at Vance Wimpole.

Getting to the End

If you are playing "The Big Hoodoo" as a one-shot and all has gone well, the foregoing action should probably have taken up about three hours. The pacing of the rest of the adventure will have to suit the amount of time you have left; I usually have only about an hour left.

If you are in the same boat as me, this means that the build-up to the climax should be telescoped. If the investigators go to the harbor to find the Excalibur, they sneak aboard an empty ship and find the painting from Catemaco, which is glossed as a surrealistic landscape whose metaphorical meaning explains what is going on, rather than presented as in the text as a full-on puzzle clue (i.e., let them "read" the painting like a Mythos clue tome). It will in any case lead them to Henninger Flats. If they go to the Foundation, Al van Vogt shares with them his concerns about Wimpole's erratic behavior, plays the assessment session tape, and then sends them off to Henninger Flats with his blessing. If they go straight to Henninger Flats, they find Vance Wimpole preparing to complete the Despite of Azatao. From there you simply allow the action to play out; usually this will involve an explosion of some kind. If it is well-planned and carefully executed, the explosion puts the kaibosh on Wimpole's plans; if otherwise, the Moon Child's transformation should be triggered and bad stuff happens all around.

This is high-stakes action at the end, then, and it may be hard to maintain the tension level, since the PCs will pull out all the stops and empty their pools to make that one critical shot or crosswire that control panel correctly. If you are not sure how to set the Difficulty of an investigator's audacious plan, consider rolling 2d6 or even 3d6 "blind"—that is, after the PCs have spent everything they are going to spend to make it work—to determine the exact target number. This should be in addition to normal Stealth rolls and other checks intended to get the investigators in a position to carry out their sabotage or rescue mission or whatever they have planned. If clever teamwork seems to require you to let other players to contribute points to the roll, make sure you impose a steep discount, on the order of two pool points spent to get +1 to the roll. Failure should be mind-blowingly catastrophic; success should be gratifyingly pyrotechnic.

Conclusion

I have fun with *The Big Hoodoo* each time I run it. The characters are engaging, the mystery is just pointed enough to be interesting, and the PCs always do clever, heroic, or just plain extraordinary things when they play. I hope that you will get a chance to run it; if you do, let me know what happens!

JEROME
2011

The Big Hoodoo

Introduction

It is June 19, 1952. Brilliant but bizarre autodidact rocket scientist Jack Parsons died two days ago, killed in his own makeshift garage laboratory by the accidental explosion of a volatile chemical—or so the Pasadena police are going to conclude after what will seem to be an open-and-shut investigation. Of course, the newspapers are going have a field day with the eccentric scientist's dabblings in the occult, his association with the diabolist Aleister Crowley, and his outlandish theosophistical writings, but no one in their right mind should seriously believe that Parsons' death had any cause other than the man's careless handling of dangerous chemicals. But for a few of Jack's long-lost friends—the investigators—the truth will bring them face-to-face with a mendacious charlatan who seeks to aggrandize himself via the power of the Mythos.

This adventure should play out like Lovecraft-flavored film noir, with investigators drawn into the interplay among a set of seedy characters with complicated histories who are working at cross-purposes. Although "The Big Hoodoo" is inspired by real-world events, and the pregenerated characters it uses share the names of real people, it departs shamelessly from the historical record as necessary for dramatic and ludic purposes. This can lead to two different problems in play that the Keeper should be prepared to address. The first is the problem of too much history: players may feel awkward, uncertain, or intimidated when playing a character who is based on a historical person if they lack knowledge about that character. For those players, background information for the pre-generated characters is provided. The second is the problem of not enough history: players may be unable to willingly suspend their disbelief if the game-fiction contradicts that which they know or suspect to be true in the real world. For those players, a scrupulous effort has been made to incorporate such details as will enhance the adventure's verisimilitude.

However, as Keeper, you should encourage your players to treat the game-world as an alternate reality that diverges from our own in several important regards, some of which they may discover or create in play. Historical accuracy should be treated lightly—it is an extraneous bagatelle; an ornamental rather than essential feature of the adventure. You can play with or against players' historical expectations about the period as you desire; for example, you may decide to present the cultists of Thelema encountered by the investigators as hedonistic libertines presaging the enormities of the Manson family, on the one hand, or as a genial patriarchy in the mold of Father Knows Best, on the other.

Ripped from History

A cavalier regard for strict historicity is especially necessary in the case of this adventure's central antagonist. Daedalus Vance Wimpole is a heavily fictionalized version of the real world's Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, who was a pulp writer, self-help guru, and eventually the founder of a controversial quasi-religious organization called Scientology. In this game, Wimpole is the head of a self-help movement-cum-religion called "Psychohistory". The reason for this was to justify the anachronistic inclusion of quasi-religious elements in the pulp guru's self-help movement (which in 1952 was still billed primarily as a new science of mental health rather than a religion) but some Keepers may wish to change Wimpole back to Hubbard and Psychohistory back to Dianetics or Scientology.

Players who are aware of Isaac Asimov's stories about the fall of a galactic empire where a predictive science called Psychohistory enables the galactic dark age to be reduced to a mere thousand years may be confused, and so should learn that in this alternate universe, Asimov's "Academy" (not "Foundation") novels feature a predictive science referred to as Scientology; any character with Art History will be aware of this. Similarly, in the game-world, should the name "L. Ron Hubbard" be mentioned, it will turn out to be that of a character based on D. Vance Wimpole who appeared in Tony Boucher's 1942 mystery novel Rocket to the Morgue, set in the pre-war science fiction scene in Los Angeles (in other words, the reverse of the situation in the real world).

The Investigators

Pre-Generated Characters

Four pre-generated characters are provided. The investigators are habitués of the science-fiction scene in California. They are based on real historical personages, some of whom may be familiar or even well-known to your players. Noted author Bob Heinlein and his wife Ginny have briefly returned to the West Coast from their new home in Colorado on the first leg of a tour around the world paid for with money earned from Bob's work on the movie Destination Moon nearly two years ago. Before they take passage on a ship bound for Hawaii, they are in San Francisco visiting Bob's friend Tony Boucher (rhymes with "voucher"), a writer and editor of fantasy, horror, and science fiction. Boucher is a sci-fi aficionado who has become one of the founding editors of The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction. Rising young talent Phil Dick, Boucher's protégé, is attracting attention for his intensely introspective and reality-bending science fictional imagination and is considering giving up his job as a record-store clerk to work on writing full-time.

Character sheets for all the PCs are given on page page 27 to be used as handouts.

Additional and Alternate Investigators

Should you have more than four players, you can easily introduce additional investigators drawn from the science-fictional circles of which Boucher, Dick and the Heinleins were part in the 1950s. Collaborators Hank Kuttner (age 39) and his wife C.(for Catherine) L. Moore (age 43) now live and work in Los Angeles, where in the

Gaming in the 1950s

Playing a game set in the 1952, like playing in the standard Trail of Cthulhu setting of the 1930s, is strictly speaking "historical" rather than "modern" gaming. Nonetheless, the slightly closer distance in time from now to then makes this era much more familiar-seeming as a setting than even the 1930s. The post-war political and social order coalescing in this period is going to shape attitudes and beliefs for the remainder of the century (well into the time of many players' living memory), and the on-going penetration of television into American households (and subsequent enshrining of 1950s suburban domesticity in popular culture) means that even the shape of everyday life in this period will seem more familiar than that of the 1930s. For U.S. players at least, the 1950s are likely to stand as a quasi-mythical "normal" against which the cultural shifts of the latter half of the 20th century stand either as deviations or advances.

In general, the cultural milieu is characterized by the pre-occupations of the period: (1) paranoid Red-baiting anti-Communist politics, (2) tensions between materialistic consumer desire (occasioned by postwar prosperity) and guilt or suspicion about giving in to social conformity (same), and eventually (3) the gradual emergence of civil rights as a persistent social concern. Technological optimism is the order of the day, consistent with increasing electrification and telephone penetration in rural areas—the U.S. has about 28 phones per 100 people at this time—and the establishment of the automobile as an icon of American social mobility and cultural possibility (about 60% of U.S. families now own a car). Science fiction, although still regarded neither as art nor literature, is beginning to provide important pop-cultural touchstones, with Howard Hawks' The Thing from Another World and Robert Wise's The Day the Earth Stood Still (both 1951, and both later re-made) serving as early examples.

Some additional cultural orientation to the period may be helpful to some players. In June 1952, when this adventure takes place, World War II has been over for only seven years. The Korean War (initiated in 1950) has entered a period of protracted stalemate while the larger Cold War against the Soviet Union simmers on in deadly earnest, exacerbated by Senator Joseph McCarthy's Red-baiting witch hunts, currently in full swing against the State Department, Hollywood, and the universities. Nuclear testing in the South Pacific and in the Nevada desert is on-going (with one desert explosion televised nationally in April). Julius and Ethel Rosenberg have been found guilty of delivering atomic secrets to the Soviet Union and await their execution in the electric chair. Harry Truman is President of the United States, having won against New York governor Thomas Dewey four years earlier. Truman's current unpopularity as a result of economic recession, the Korean war, and revelations of governmental corruption has led him to announce that he will not seek re-election, particularly after his loss in the New Hampshire primary to Senator Estes Kefauver in March.

On television (still only available in black-and-white, and only to 34% of American households), I Love Lucy and Dragnet just ended their first seasons, The Ed Sullivan Show is four years old, and Milton Berle is near the height of his popularity as "Uncle Miltie" on Texaco Star Theatre. Leroy Anderson's instrumental "Blue Tango" is a presence on the airwaves, and Gene Kelly's movie musical Singin' in the Rain was a hit with audiences earlier in the year. Novels of World War II top the fiction bestseller list, including James Jones From Here to Eternity and Herman Wouk's The Caine Mutiny, both of which deal with men confronting the constraints of regimented organizational life, a theme that will be picked up throughout the decade.

1930s Kuttner was active in fandom and part of the Mañana Literary Society. Jack Williamson (age 46), currently working on his M.A. in English in New Mexico, had lived in Hollywood briefly before the war. He was friends with Heinlein and Boucher, and had met Parsons in the 1940s after publishing a novel about magic and werewolves in the modern world called Darker Than You Think, of which Parsons was a great fan. He could coincidentally be visiting his old friends in California when Parsons dies. Ray Bradbury (age 34) has been a Los Angeles resident since he was a teenager, and had met Heinlein, Kuttner, and Williamson through the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society in the 1930s; he was friends with Forrest Ackerman. Paul Anderson (age 28) and his graduate student wife Karen (age 22) have just moved from Minnesota to Berkeley, where they become friends with Phil Dick and his wife Kleo (age 22)—who would also make a fine investigator. Even Isaac Asimov (age 34) might plausibly appear, having perhaps traveled across the country by train (still a common mode of travel, and he is afraid to fly) to give a speech or accept an award; he and Heinlein were friends, having worked together in Philadelphia during the war. The presence of British sf master Arthur C. Clarke (age 37) would be a stretch, but he might be passing through en route to a scuba diving trip off the California coast. Create these investigators using the Author or Scientist templates, modifying them in light of such biographical details as you are able to obtain.

If there are fewer than four players, you may use the unplayed investigators as NPCs under the loose control of one of the players, or simply remove them from the game. In the latter case, you should give the investigators additional build points to spend on Investigative abilities, per the guidelines in the rulebook.

Pacing the Adventure

To fully explore all of the ramifications of this adventure could easily take six to eight hours of play, perhaps divided into two or three sessions. If you intend to run this in a single session—say, as a four-hour convention slot—some aggressive pacing will be necessary. Use investigators' Drives to motivate them to act, antagonist reactions (including visits from the FBI and the police) to shanghai them from one location to another, and NPCs like Jane Wolfe, Omar Garrison, Forrie Ackerman, and Wilfred Smith to unload exposition. Hand-wave fight scenes or resolve them with a single roll if necessary. Ideally, you'll want to budget about an hour and a half for Part One (The Long Hook: A wake for Jack Parsons, a drive in the desert with Marjorie Cameron, and a meeting at the Church of Thelema) and two hours for Part Two (Down These Mean Streets: The investigators make inquiries and follow up on the initial clues), leaving about a half-hour for Part Three (The Despite of Azatao: The investigators show up to suborn the ritual).

The Shape of the Investigation

The Hook

The game begins at the wake for **Jack Parsons**, a colorful but distant acquaintance whom some of the investigators know from his involvement as a science fiction fan before World War II. A number of curious invitations are issued at the wake, and accepting these invitations embroils the investigators in the conflicts among those Parsons has left behind. However, the investigators have different reasons (Drives) for wanting to know more.

The Horrible Truth

Jack Parsons, a rocket scientist and practicing magician, was killed while conducting a dangerous bit of alchemy, the concoction of an entheogenic elixir called space mead. The explosion occurred because of a magical curse pronounced by Parsons' former magical partner **Daedalus Vance Wimpole**, who had learned from Parsons' wife **Marjorie Cameron** that he intended to conduct a ritual called the Despite of Azatao. Wimpole was keen to interfere, since he had been imbued with a powerful chaos-spirit as an unanticipated consequence of a magical ritual called the Babalon Working that the two men had conducted together in 1946. Wimpole thought the whole thing was a joke, and in fact arranged to have Cameron "coincidentally" arrive as the "elemental being" the ritual was intended to summon, but to his shock he found himself in touch with a "burning voice" inside his head—the spirit of Azatao (whom the Necronomicon calls Azathoth). Parsons' bizarre new ritual was intended to complete the work begun in 1946. He would use neo-Enochian magic to alchemically transmute the requisite raw materials inside the fuel tank of a small sounding rocket into space mead, which would act as rocket fuel and upon ignition send the rocket in the direction of the Mt. Wilson Solar Observatory, which Jack believed was a temple to Azatao. The specially prepared rocket would then serve as the focus for a second spell that would symbolically defeat Azatao and render the deity temporarily powerless. This would have the effect of awakening the Moon Child—the "soul and messenger" of Azatao—who would then go on to usher in a new age of licentious freedom. With Parsons dead, Wimpole now intends to subvert the ritual to give himself greater sorcerous power. He thinks that if he sacrifices the Moon Child while at the same time conducting the Despite of Azatao himself, he will become dominant in his relationship with the Outer God. As a final fillip of horror, it may become clear by the end of the adventure that one of the investigators is the Moon Child (i.e., an avatar of Nyarlathotep)—Philip K. Dick is the obvious candidate from among the pre-generated investigators.

Victory Conditions

The investigators must prevent D. Vance Wimpole from enacting the Despite of Azatao, possibly by enacting it themselves, and prevent both the sacrifice and the manifestation of the Moon Child Nyarlathotep.

The Trail of Clues

The investigators, for a variety of reasons, arrive at the small memorial service for their friend Jack Parsons on the afternoon of June 19, 1952 (I Am The Way to a City of Woe). They meet a number of curious characters, most notably Marjorie Cameron, Parsons' widow, and learn that she's afraid that the FBI is after her. She attempts to enlist one or more investigators to help her evade anyone who might be following her (Requiem for a Rocket Scientist). Meanwhile, Parsons' ex-wife **Helen Smith** attempts to enlist one or more investigators to help protect her sister **Betty** from her estranged husband Vance Wimpole, while others may encounter a nosy newspaper reporter (For Us, The Living). Those who go with Marjorie Cameron may experience an unsettling ghostly encounter in the middle of the Mojave Desert, during or after which Cameron disappears (Drive in the Desert), while those who accept Helen Smith's importuning may arrive at an occult ceremony in Jack's honor in time to have a run-in with Wimpole's goons, who try to kidnap Betty's daughter **Alexis**, Betty herself, or both (The Church of Thelema). Retracing Marjorie Cameron's steps takes the investigators down to the Santa Monica Pier, where a connection to Vance Wimpole can be uncovered (At The Pier). For his part, Vance Wimpole will be hard to find; investigators pursuing his trail may find themselves searching his business (The Foundation) or hunting for his boat (The *Excalibur*). In seeking to make sense of these events, the investigators may find themselves visiting Jack's old haunts (In A Strange Land), which ultimately leads them to the Mount Wilson Observatory, where they pick up Vance Wimpole's trail as well (Rocket to the Morgue). A painting with heavily mystical symbolism, obtained aboard the *Excalibur*, provides the details of the occult ritual invented by Parsons if it can be interpreted correctly (The Painting from Catemaco). Armed with this information or not, the investigators make their way or are led to Henninger Flats, in the mountains north of Pasadena, to confront Vance Wimpole as he attempts to enact The Despite of Azatao.

Part One: The Long Hook

The first part of the adventure gets the investigators involved and provides the necessary exposition. As part of this process, some NPCs are introduced and then "pointed at" the investigators: in other words, they attempt to enlist the PCs in their business. This is particularly true of Marjorie Cameron and Helen Smith, and to a lesser extent of Ed Forman. Other NPCs are interested in what the PCs are up to, or what they know—this includes **Forrie Ackerman** and **Omar Garrison**.

Establish what's going on as the scenario begins: in the case of the pregens, the investigators have driven down together from San Francisco that morning—a journey of several hours—to attend a wake for Jack Parsons near Los Angeles, and are just about to arrive at the funeral home where it takes place, having checked in at the nearby Aztec Hotel in Monrovia, where the sprawl of the Los Angeles area begins to peter out. Give them a copy of Handout #1 (page page 17), a newspaper article detailing what they know of the circumstances surrounding Jack Parsons death.

Rules for Movement

Give the players Handout #2 (page page 14). The accompanying GM aid (page page 118) schematizes the geographical relationships among the main locations that the investigators may move between. Imagine each "road link" as requiring about half an hour of travel by car, more or less: you may have investigators make Drive rolls versus Difficulty 4, with each point above the roll reducing the time by about 5 minutes (to a minimum of 15) and each point below increasing it by 5 minutes.

The exception is the "road" leading north out of Pasadena into the San Gabriel Mountains to Mt. Wilson via Henninger Flats, a total distance of about eight miles as the crow flies. But the road is actually a hiking trail called the Mount Wilson Toll Road Trail; it was once used to haul construction materials up to Mount Wilson, but has since been turned over mainly to recreational use. Hiking the Mount Wilson Toll Road Trail is a journey of about two hours on foot to move from one trail link to another. An investigator with Outdoorsman may safely attempt to move faster—allow the player to set the Difficulty of an Athletics or Fleeing test (maximum 6) which if successful cuts off 10 minutes per point of Difficulty from the travel time; on a failure, the travel time is still reduced but the investigator loses 1 point of Health for each point by which the roll failed. PCs without Outdoorsman may still try to move quickly along the mountainous trail, but must Sense Trouble at Difficulty 4 to avoid taking 1d6-2 damage to Health due to pulled muscles, overexertion, and the like.

I Am The Way to a City of Woe

The scene begins with the investigators arriving at a funeral home for Jack Parsons' wake. They meet Forrie Ackerman—a devotee of Psychohistory secretly spying for Vance Wimpole—before heading in to the wake proper. On their way in, they witness a curious exchange between two of Jack's colleagues from the world of rocketry, Ed Forman and Professor Theodore von Kármán.

The Parking Lot (Forrie Ackerman)

Scene Type: Core

Thursday. June 19, 1952. It is the middle of the afternoon on the West Coast. In their car, the investigators pass through the gates of a park-like cemetery shaded by trees; the sign at the gate reads, 'Liveoak Cemetery'. They follow an oak-lined driveway that curves past rows of white headstones stretching off in every direction.

The investigators pull into the parking lot, where a man in a cheap suit—lanky, bespectacled, a paperback with a lurid cover in his hand—stands awkwardly by his car, looking expectantly toward their approaching vehicle. *"Oh, shit,"* somebody mutters. *"It's Forrie Ackerman."*

Forrest J. "Forrie" Ackerman

(b. 1916, age 36). Skills: **Drive** 4, **Health** 6. Special: Ackerman gets a +1 **Psychohistory** bonus. Drive: **Antiquarianism**

Play Ackerman as a proto-nerd, the original ubergeek fanboy from whom all others descend, a sci-fi man-child on his own in Hollywood. Forrie is a collector of all things "sciffy"—as he puts it—including sci-fi, fantasy, and horror books, paintings, and memorabilia. The ashes of a certain occultist rocket scientist are in this category. He is awkwardly gregarious and will be generally oblivious to slights and put-downs in his fawning devotion to the luminaries of the sci-fi universe. If you can, fill his talk with puns and wordplay as well as references to monster movies, UFOs, and bug-eyed aliens. Occasionally push your glasses up on your nose with the base of your palm.

Ackerman's Connections to the Investigators. Ackerman considers Bob Heinlein and Tony Boucher to be his good friends. He met Ginny briefly once two years ago but dislikes her out of a weird sense of loyalty to Bob's first wife Leslyn, who was always kind to him. He knows Dick by reputation and is a fan of Dick's work because of its psychological strangeness, although he would like there to be more conventional science fiction tropes in it like rocketships and rayguns.

Psychohistory (resource tome)

This is a slim paperback emblazoned with the title Psychohistory in red in small caps against a starry black background representing a portion of the night sky, with the name "D. Vance Wimpole" in larger type below. **Astronomy** allows an investigator to recognize the Pleiades and the constellation Taurus, with its prominent red star Aldebaran. A starburst with the words "The National Best Seller!" is located in an upper corner.

The book can be skimmed in several hours and pored over in a day or two; **Library Use** can considerably reduce these times. In a prolix and pretentious style, with intimations of having overcome profound and implacable resistance from the medical and psychiatric establishment, it announces the discovery of a new mental science with profound implications for human health and sanity. It declares that the techniques it espouses allow the Psychohistorical initiate to rid his unconscious mind of the mental traumas that cause psychological and physical problems, which removal results in an increase in strength, intelligence, dexterity, wisdom, constitution, and charisma so long as one's actions are consonant with one's newly purified beliefs. After a review of the basic Psychohistorical procedures, which come across as a kind of guided autosuggestion, the book goes on to say that the best results are achieved by those who have been trained as psychohistorians in one of the Foundations established since Psychohistory was first introduced (a list is provided at the end of the book; it includes an address for the one in Los Angeles, 206 South Hoover Street in Hollywood—core clue). It hints that greater gains are available to those who receive Foundation training to progress beyond the level of "initiate" through "adept" to that of "master psychohistorian." So much is revealed by skimming the book.

Psychohistorical Assessment: Poring over the book qualifies one to conduct Psychohistorical assessment on another person at a basic level. This requires a test of one's **Psychohistory** skill, which begins at zero and increases by one after a number of sessions equal to one's current skill plus one; so it takes one session to achieve a skill of 1, two more to raise it to 2, three after that to raise it to 3, and so forth, to a maximum equal to twice the psychohistorian's **Credit Rating**. The **Difficulty** of the test is the Sanity of the Psychohistorical subject.

An assessment session involves the assessor asking the subject a series of questions intended to get him or her to "isolate the psychic engraining" that produces illness, weakness, and unhappiness. Most subjects resist, because the process is emotionally painful, but a good assessor is able to overcome that resistance, and the subject is suddenly overwhelmed with memories from youth, childhood, and even infancy that are embarrassing, traumatic, or bewildering. This is a strange epiphany almost like a physical shock for the subject, who must test **Stability** at **Difficulty** 4 to avoid a 2 point loss as a result.

Psychohistorical Empowerment: If the subject successfully deals with the surge of memories (i.e., makes the **Stability** test), he or she is said to be "psychohistorically empowered," and is able to draw upon a reservoir of personal afflatus or psychic energy to lend his or her efforts increased effectiveness or force. This empowering operates when the subject is pursuing a specific purpose (i.e., obeying a Drive). For initiates (that is, first-level Psychohistorians) this amounts to a +1 **Psychohistory** bonus. Adepts (second-level) receive a bonus of +2. Master psychohistorians receive a +4 bonus. In all cases, each point of **Psychohistory** bonus may be used once per turn (or extended contest) to increase a General ability roll, increase the **Difficulty** of another's General ability roll against the psychohistorian, increase the psychohistorian's damage roll, or reduce the damage rolled by another character against the psychohistorian. So, for example, a Psychohistorian adept could increase the **Difficulty** of the investigators' **Sense Trouble** roll by +2 on one turn, make an attack at +1 to hit and +1 damage the next, and then make a normal attack but reduce the damage he suffers from the investigators' counter-attack by 2 on the third. This ability may only be invoked if the psychohistorian is demonstrably pursuing his or her Drive! As Keeper, you should scrupulously police yourself in this regard; if you can't by (role-played) word or deed demonstrate the Drive in action, you should forgo the bonus.

In play, when investigators face psychohistorically empowered opponents, you as Keeper should make clear that those opponents are drawing upon some deep reserve of strength, creativity, or power when they act, perhaps imposing a 2- or even 3-point Stability test for witnessing such empowered feats.

Art History. "Forrie" Ackerman was one of the founding members of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, and is an inveterate collector of sci-fi memorabilia from movies and magazines. He is science fiction's most ardent and well-connected fan. He writes letters to authors and other fans, attends conventions, and wears costumes. He holds an open house each week at his house in Beverly Hills, which he calls the "Ackermansion," so fans and friends can see his collection. He's also been a literary agent for some well-known writers of science fiction such as Vance Wimpole and A.E. van Vogt.

Ackerman peers at their car until they get close enough for him to recognize the investigators. He raises a hand in greeting. "*I wanted to pay my respects in there,*" he says. *"Jack was one of us. But I'm nervous. I'm glad you fellas are here. Can I tag along with you?"* He will make idle conversation as the investigators move toward the entrance. *"How was*

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the drive down? Are you staying long? Where's your hotel? Hey, Bob, I have to say that I loved 'Destination Moon'*; those Bonestell backdrops were top-notch.*" He will gush over Phil's work when they are introduced. "*You wrote* 'The Little Movement*!*'" he'll cry. "*And* 'Beyond Lies the Wub*!' I love those stories! They're twisted! You'll have to come to the Ackermansion and sign my copies!*"

Assess Honesty (leverage: **Art History**). Forrie is not living up to his reputation by being so reticent about schmoozing with people, even if it is at a funeral. **Follow-Up**: Forrie will dismiss any suggestion that something is wrong with him. "*I'm just nervous is all.*" What's he nervous about? *"Oh, um, well, you know that Jack was into some pretty weird stuff. It's just—I'm just—never mind. Let's go."* A **1 pt. spend** (also **Flattery**, 1 pt. spend) confirms that he's hiding something big. **The Truth**: Ackerman is nervous because Vance Wimpole is counting on him and he wants to do a good job. "Forward the Foundation!" He's got orders to keep an eye on Marjorie Cameron, and is supposed to call in a report on her: who she's with and where she's headed. It will take a 1 pt. player-suggested **Intimidation** spend to get him to reveal that Vance Wimpole put him up to it, but that's all he knows.

Evidence Collection. Forrie is reading D. Vance Wimpole's new self-help book, *Psychohistory*. With a 1 point spend, the investigator notices that it's autographed. In the back of the book is a phone number and the words "*Friendship Org*," written by the same hand seemingly. **Follow-Up:** The number reaches the Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation. If pressed, Forrie will awkwardly and unconvincingly claim that Wimpole had just invited him to receive a free session of Psychohistorical assessment. **The Truth:** This is the number Forrie is supposed to call to report back to Wimpole, asking the operator to connect him to "Friendship Org" and leaving any messages with the man who answers (who will then pass on any instructions he has received to relay to Forrie).

The Funeral Home

Scene Type: Core (Introduction)

The building consists of two low, block-shaped structures of whitewashed adobe connected by an open breezeway. One, slightly larger, is windowless, with a narrow tapering cylindrical chimney rising from it (this is the crematorium). The other is cut with half a dozen abstract stained glass panels along the side, giving the impression of religiosity without any specific denominational commitment (this is the funeral home proper). Entering the funeral home, the investigators proceed into a vestibule with stained glass windows on either side. There are two men in the vestibule, talking quietly: an older man still wearing his hat and coat, facing away from the investigators, and a lanky and lugubrious fellow in his late 30s in short sleeves, somewhat unkempt, standing in the doorway leading from the vestibule deeper into the building. The older man is Dr. Theodore van Kármán of Caltech, one of Jack's mentors; the other man is Ed Forman, an engineer and friend from childhood who was Jack's business partner.

The Keys to the Kingdom (Ed Forman)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Evidence Collection (core clue) lets the first investigator through the door notice Ed Forman at that instant give something to von Kármán—a small object, like a set of keys or a small piece of jewelry. If that observer also has **Assess Honesty**, he or she gets the impression that Forman is reluctant to give it up, and that he is pleading with or warning von Kármán about something. Von Kármán's reply seems to shock or upset Forman. After making the exchange, von Kármán makes an abrupt about face and departs, disturbed by Forman's outlandish behavior. He will brush past the investigators with a brusque nod. **The Truth**: Forman has given von Kármán the keys to the Aerojet storage warehouse in Azusa where he worked with Parsons on the modified sounding rocket for the Despite of Azatao. He informed von Kármán that he was accosted last night on his way into his house by two men—a jowly old low-life and a broad-shouldered surfer type—who roughed him up until he told them where the rocket was. He thinks they were sent by Marjorie, who didn't know where the rocket was being put together. Von Kármán shocks him when he tells him that the warehouse was broken into last night as well, and the rocket is gone. Forman will stagger to the side of the vestibule, lurch into a chair, and bury his face in his hands.

Ed Forman

(b. 1913, age 39) is loose-limbed and lanky, with a long, serious face and large hands. The death of his childhood friend has hit him hard; he is clearly in a great deal of pain. He looks like he has been through the wringer.

Skills: **Athletics** 4, **Fleeing** 4, **Health** 6, **Scuffling** 4. Play Forman as a man bereft; grimace and tighten your mouth as if trying to keep your act together. Make visible efforts to keep it together. Remember that he is hearing banshees in his head.

Evidence Collection (core clue). Forman's face is puffy and bruised-looking. Was he in a fight?

A **Reassurance** spend will let an investigator calm Forman down and get him talking. Otherwise, they may pass by, in which case they may get a chance to talk to Forman later.

Oral History (core clue). Me and Jack were friends since my family first came to Pasadena; he was a little rich kid with no friends, except me. We needed each other. He got bullied a lot, but I was a big kid, and I wouldn't let them get away with it. We started experimenting with rockets early on; he was the brains, I was the hands. We were partners in everything.

D. Vance Wimpole: What the Investigators Know

At least one of the investigators should have a prior connection to Wimpole highlighted in play. During the 1930s, D. Vance Wimpole was a writer of pulp fiction renowned for his prodigious output of adventure stories: Westerns, detectives, science fiction, you name it, as fast as he could type for as long as he got paid. During the war, he joined the Navy and acquitted himself with some distinction. When the war ended, he left the Navy and dropped out of sight after spending some time on the West Coast.

Art History (1 pt. spend). Vance Wimpole had a reputation among his fellow pulp writers as an incorrigible exaggerator and a teller of tall tales with an outsize ego and the ability to hold a grudge.

Bonus Clue (1 pt. spend, any appropriate skill—**Bureaucracy, CopTalk**, or **Library Use** most likely). Wimpole's wartime Navy records show that he was twice relieved of command for overconfidence, poor judgment, and grandiose overestimation of his own abilities and importance. Most notable is the time when, commanding anti-submarine patrol boat, he fired on an island owned by Mexico in the waters south of San Diego, causing a minor diplomatic incident between the U.S. and its neighbor. He ended the war as a minor functionary in the Intelligence section, performing duties as a military censor.

Bonus Clue (1 pt. spend, any appropriate skill—**Art History, Oral History,** or **Library Use** most likely). After the war, Wimpole had a hard time getting back into writing and seemed to be trying to get rich quick with a handful of grandiose schemes. After he and Jack Parsons had a falling out over money and a woman, Wimpole left the West Coast.

Then, two years ago, he re-appeared. In the pages of Don Stewart's *Flabbergasting Science Fiction* magazine, Wimpole announced to great acclaim that he had created a "new mental health science" he called *Psychohistory*. A subsequently released book of that title became a national best-seller, and now there is a burgeoning Psychohistory movement, with Wimpole himself running training sessions for "psychohistorian-adepts" at "Foundations" located across the country.

If you have time—in convention play you almost certainly will not—you can take a PC's inquiry "Do I know anything about Vance Wimpole?" as an opportunity to run very short directed scenes in which one or more of the investigators interacts with Wimpole in order to reveal something of his personality and character. You are allowed to require a spend (**Assess Honesty** or **Credit Rating**, e.g.) to initiate the flashback scene, but it's not strictly necessary. In these scenes, play Wimpole as a smarmy red-headed blowhard with a hot temper, a soft touch, and an eye on the main chance. End the scene when you feel both Wimpole and the PC have had a chance to establish their characters and relationship with each other. Note that any Investigative skills used in the scene count as having been used for real, although the point of these scenes is not primarily investigative. If you don't run these as scenes, you can still use the information provided here to frame up, "You remember . . ."-type answers to PC questions.

Tony Boucher. A scene in which an angry Wimpole, meeting Boucher seemingly by chance on the streets of San Francisco near the close of the war, angrily confronts him over the character L. Ron Hubbard in Tony's 1942 mystery novel *Rocket to the Morgue*. "*I'm the murderer! He's obviously based on me! Any fool with eyes could see it! And you've made me look like a nincompoop!*" He will go on about how "the Navy brass" will regard this as a stain upon his spotless record, and threaten to sue Boucher for libel and defamation of character. *The point of this scene is to play up Wimpole's grandiose and rather deluded sense of self.*

Phil Dick. A scene in which Phil attends a Psychohistorical Foundation lecture at Berkeley by Wimpole himself, on a West Coast tour last year. The audience seems to made up mainly of awkward-looking college-age boys. Wimpole takes the stage and gives a long rambling speech about the power of the immaterial soul to conquer the material world, the mind to master the body, and the will to direct the flesh. Three men come on stage—a young man with broad shoulders, a thin neurasthenic-type in his thirties, and a stolid middle-aged fellow with a jowly scowl—and demonstrate "the powers of Psychohistory." The first man easily lifts a large steamer trunk that two audience members could barely budge and holds it over his head (albeit obviously with some strain); the second balances himself in a handstand atop a folding chair and then acrobatically dismounts; the third stands immobile while the first picks up a two-by-four and strikes him from behind across the shoulders with it; the two-by-four breaks and the third man isn't even fazed. Wimpole invites a volunteer to come forward to be psychohistorically assessed on stage. *The point of this scene is provide an opportunity to learn more about Psychohistory per se, and to lend a sense of menace to the three goons the PCs will encounter later in the adventure.*

Bob Heinlein. A scene from right after the war in which Bob's then-wife Leslyn is drunk and screaming mad at Wimpole, their house guest for a few days, for telling her young nephews (maybe 8 and 10) that he would take them to the Philippines to search for their father—who was caught and executed by the Japanese as a guerilla. Wimpole will be unable to understand why she'd would think he'd done anything wrong—"*I was only trying to make them feel better*"—but will know when he's not wanted. "Maybe I'll go stay with your friend Jack for a little while," he tells Bob. *The point of this scene is to highlight Wimpole's easy disregard for the truth, and his willingness to tell people what they want to hear.*

Ginny Heinlein. A scene in which Wimpole, then stationed near Princeton, comes to Philadelphia for a meeting convened by Bob intended to bring a bunch of science fiction writers together to develop ideas for fighting kamikazes to pass along to Bob's old CO Admiral King, now Chief of Naval Operations. When Ginny—then Lieutenant Gerstenberger—is detailed to give Wimpole a tour of the facility (where they develop and produce things like Plexiglas cockpit canopies, inflatable life rafts, and other plastics-based materials), Lt. Cdr. Wimpole makes a pass at Ginny. "*Say, what are you doing later, Lieutenant?*" he says. "*How about I buy you dinner?*" He will brag about his military exploits hunting subs in the Atlantic, and mention that he has applied for intelligence duty on the West Coast. *The point of this scene is to characterize Wimpole as an aggressive womanizer with the morals of a snake.*

We wanted to build a rocket to fly to the moon. We had one last project that we were working on, but that bitch—she sold him out. **Follow-up:** The grieving widow, that's who I mean. Follow-up: I can't say any more. It was pretty hush-hush government work.

Assess Honesty (core clue; leverage: Parsons was suspected of being a Red). Forman is not being forthright about the purpose of the "rocketry experiment" that he and Parsons were working on. If Parsons couldn't find work in the national security industries because the FBI was investigating his supposed Communist ties, how could he be doing hush-hush government work? **Follow-Up**: Confronted by this inconsistency, Forman will be obviously discomfited at first. Then he'll lie poorly, claiming that Jack's friend and mentor Professor von Kármán had "pulled some strings at JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory)" for them.

Reassurance. You don't understand. It's all real—the magic, the black magic—it's real. I know. I used to help him with that, too. Once, once, after a working, I went home. I woke up at midnight when I felt the whole house shake. I looked outside and I could see these lights floating in the sky, coming closer. They were shrieking, louder and louder. I ran inside but I could still hear them. I thought I was going to go crazy. The next thing I knew, it was morning, and there was Jack at the door. He had tears running down his face. Crowley had died during the night; the telegram was right there in Jack's hand. Those things I saw, they were banshees—spirits of death. We'd called them up somehow. **Follow-Up**: I heard them again the night Jack died. And I can still hear them now. They're quieter, but they're there. I don't think they're ever going to go away. **Follow-Up**: It was so strange. After Crowley died, all Jack said was, "*We have to get some of his ashes.*"

Requiem for a Rocket Scientist

The investigators witness an emotional scene, and encounter a newspaper reporter with lots of questions. They learn something of the history of Jack Parsons, and are invited to go in several different directions by the end of the ceremony.

The Mourning Chapel

Leaving the vestibule through the archway, the investigators follow a long hallway that runs the length of the building. About halfway down, an easel festooned with a wreath of flowers standing outside one open doorway down the hall bears a sign that reads "*In Memoriam John W. Parsons, 1914-1952.*"

Before the investigators enter, sketch out the mourning chapel: a single large stained glass window at the back, small altar with two brass canisters beneath, a few short wooden pews on either side of a central aisle.

Have Ackerman whisper the names of the people he knows to the investigators as you place them on the map: "*Look, there's the widow (***Marjorie Cameron***) by that pair of urns and that must be her brother next to her (***Robert Cameron***). The woman with the strong jaw and the white hair is Jane Wolfe; she was a big name in the movie biz once upon a time. Apparently she knew Aleister Crowley himself, and helped Jack learn magic. Then there's Jack's ex-wife* **Helen** (**Smith**) *in the front with her little boy* **Kwen**, *and, uh, speaking of ex-wives, Bob, isn't that* **Leslyn** (**Heinlein,** *Bob's ex-wife) over there?*"

The following sub-sections describe events at the wake. Sub-scenes identified as "Clue (Core)" will occur independent of investigator action. Sub-scenes identified as "Clue (Bonus)" may occur depending on what the investigators do. Some of the information in those scenes is labeled as core clue as well; you should be prepared to deliver that information to the investigators in later scenes as they follow up their initial inquiries.

Who Are You? (Robert Cameron)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Robert Cameron

(b. 1924, age 28) is a slender young man who greatly resembles his sister, except that his hair is very dark. He seems a little overwhelmed by the circumstances. To play Robert Cameron, run your fingers through your hair or press your hand to the side of your neck or face as you speak. He will approach investigators that he does not know and suspiciously inquire about their identity—who are you? What do you want? How did you know Jack? When their bona fides have been established (perhaps via the intervention of Helen Smith, who may have met Boucher or Heinlein when she was still married to Jack, but the give the players a chance), Robert Cameron will apologize: he's anxious because Marjorie has been paranoid about strangers since Jack died.

Oral History (core clue). Marjorie's very upset. She and Jack were going through a tough time, but the project he was working on for the government was almost finished, and they were going to take a vacation and try to work things out. But apparently Jack was still having problems with the FBI about his security clearance, because agents had been visiting his friends and relatives asking what they knew about his work—trying to see if he'd been disloyal and talked about things he shouldn't. And now Marjorie is afraid that they're coming to take her in for questioning. **Follow-Up**: What was he working on? I don't know. I didn't ask, and he wouldn't tell me even if I did ask. He wasn't disloyal.

Reassurance (core clue). It's been a rough couple of days. Marjorie has been beside herself, and having to stay at her poor dead mother-in-law's apartment can't be easy. I said she could stay with me, but it's really too cramped, and my landlord is annoyed enough at me at it is for wanting to store their little vacation trailer in his garage.

Concerning Leslyn (Leslyn Heinlein)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

Leslyn Heinlein

(nee MacDonald, b. 1906, age 46) is Bob's ex-wife. She is a tiny woman with short dark hair; her patrician looks have been ruined by drink so that she comes across as bitter, shriveled and minatory—that is, crow-like. She will be quietly drunk and in a vicious mood. To play Leslyn, wrinkle your nose and try to smile. The attitude you are going for is a kind of sneering condescension. Tinge your speech with bitterness and anger. Leslyn is here because she was fond of Jack Parsons from the days before the war; she regarded him as a kindred free spirit, like her resistant to but shackled by the conventional pieties of the era. She will be unpleasantly surprised by Bob's presence at the wake. "*Jack wasn't stuck in the past like some people I know*," she could say. "*He was trying to actually bring about a real future, a better future, not just write about a 'tomorrow' that's really just a dressed-up adolescent power fantasy.*" She is perfectly willing to make a scene, and will try to goad Ginny Heinlein, calling her a "*red-headed Navy slut, just like that other one*" (by which she means Marjorie Cameron, a former WAVE as well). She will also blame Bob for Parsons' death. "*It's your fault he's dead*," she will say. "*He came to you for help, and you pushed him away*." The vehemence of her attack may warrant a small **Stability** test—no more than a point or two.

Flattery (1 pt. spend). Yes, I was Jack's friend. We both knew what it was like to be betrayed by someone you loved. I tried to help him. It wasn't much; I gave him some money. He said he needed it as a deposit on some surveying equipment he needed to rent to lay out the range for a rocket he was going to test. **Follow-Up**: Where? I don't know where. I think he had gotten some sort of contract from the Hale Observatory folks. Funny that he wouldn't tell you about that, Bob, don't you think?

Poetry Reading

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Marjorie Cameron

(b. 1922, age 30) is a striking redhead with skin like clotted cream. But her pale blue eyes have a haunted look to them, and her scarlet lips are twisted down in a pained frown. She wears black for mourning. To play Marjorie Cameron, relax your shoulders and gaze off into the middle distance; speak in a breathless whisper. The effect you are striving for is that of being quietly and dreamily stoned.

After the investigators are oriented to the setting, and have perhaps had a chance to talk to some of the other mourners, Marjorie Cameron, holding a thin typescript, calls for everyone's attention, saying, "*I'd like—I'd like to read one of Jack's poems. This is one he dedicated to me.*" She reads in a faltering voice:

I remember
When I was a star
In the night
A moving, burning ember
Amid the bright
Clouds of star fire
Going deathward
To the womb.

There is more, but she cannot continue. Her arms fall to her sides, fists balled, and she bows her head, face collapsing into artless grief. Her brother Robert puts his arms around her shoulders. When Helen Smith goes to comfort her, Cameron angrily and tearfully rebuffs her. "*Get away from me! You wouldn't help him! You didn't believe in his work! You didn't believe in him!*" **Assess Honesty** allows an investigator to note a highly charged depth of emotion in her words: the hurt is raw and fresh. In tears, Cameron will excuse herself, heading for the restroom to compose herself.

Jane Wolfe then recites the rest of Jack's poem from memory, hamming it up shamelessly.

And I dreamed
and the great powers
moved over me
And a voice cried
Go free, star, go free
Seek the dark home
On the wild sky
Good bye, star, good bye!

"*Good bye, Jack*," Wolfe will say, theatrically wistful. "*You were in such a great rush to leave us*." **Assess Honesty** will suggest that Wolfe is grandstanding; her theatricality marks her as glib and insincere, and hungry for even a little bit of attention.

Even if no one follows Cameron to the powder room (see **The Grieving Widow,** opposite), investigators with **Evidence Collection** will notice a pronounced change in Cameron's behavior when she returns: she seems

calmer emotionally but physically restless, gazing around the room and changing position. Her eyes are vacant and glassy (i.e., pupil dilation) and she appears to be highly distracted. **Pharmacy** will enable an investigator to infer that she is under the influence of a hallucinogenic drug like mescaline, psilocybin, or LSD.

Cameron will not open up to an investigator until she is alone with him or her; see **Drive in the Desert,** on page page 94.

The Grieving Widow (Marjorie Cameron)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

An investigator who follows Marjorie from the mourning chapel will see her taking a covert sip from a small metal hip flask she has concealed in her black garter belt; the 8 oz. flask is now still about three-quarters full; it contains enough *space mead* (see sidebar) to constitute two full doses or up to six small sips.

She will make a face as she swallows and give a little gasping exhalation. Spotting the investigator, she will try to make light of being caught with the flask. "*Regular rocket fuel,*" she says, giving a little laugh. **Assess Honesty** gets that she is indulging a private joke. Then Marjorie starts to sob. "*He's gone*," she moans. "*And I don't know what to do!*"

If Marjorie Cameron makes a connection with an investigator here (a **Reassurance** spend or good role-playing), the she will ask him or her to drive her home (or out into the desert to spread Jack's ashes—whichever seems more natural in the moment), and hand over her car keys to the investigator.

Space Mead

For more complete information on space mead, see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 110. In short, a small sip allows the imbiber to use **Sense Trouble** as an investigative skill (see the examples below), possibly avoiding that trouble by means of a spend, at the cost of restricting the use of Interpersonal abilities as the imbiber is dreamily stoned. Another liability of using space mead is to render the imbiber more vulnerable to **Stability** tests caused by exposure to otherworldly sensations and perceptions.

Sense Trouble (example). Anyone sensitized to higher-dimensional resonances by the space mead will be able to perceive those who have **Psychohistory** bonus points as "holding a knot of power inside" themselves.

Sense Trouble (example). Anyone sensitized to higher-dimensional resonances by the space mead will perceive that Ed Forman is "enmeshed in negative energies" or "haunted by dark angels" in a profoundly disturbing way—as if his very soul is about to be crushed or snuffed out. Test **Stability** at **Difficulty** 4 to avoid a 3 pt. loss.

The formula concocted by Parsons is poisonous. Ingesting any amount requires a **Health** test, versus **Difficulty** 4 for a small sip or **Difficulty** 6 for a full dose. Failing the test does damage equal to the difference between the roll and the **Difficulty** number; the imbiber may also become messily nauseated.

Space mead is created using neo-Enochian magic (see **Neo-Enochian Magick**, on page page 118).

For Us, The Living

These scenes include exposition and the opportunity to make useful contacts as well as developing the broader plot.

Crying Wolfe (Jane Wolfe)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

Jane Wolfe

(b. 1875, age 77) is frail-seeming but fierce, a hawk-like old woman, still striking in appearance and demeanor. Play her extravagantly, a real-life Norma Desmond with a hint of New Age wackiness thrown in. Overemote as you speak, and make sweeping gestures and pronouncements.

Art History, 1 pt. spend. Jane Wolfe was a silent film-era character actress who appeared in many films during the 1910s, including a major supporting role under Mary Pickford in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.* Then she left Hollywood and became a disciple of the notorious Aleister Crowley at an old monastery in Italy until Mussolini kicked them out.

Flattery. Oh, yes, she came to Hollywood when it was young, and she could have been a star—but she gave it all up for Aleister, don't you know, unholy Aleister Crowley, the magician. Three years she was in Sicily, at the Abbey of Thelema with Crowley. She was his Scarlet Woman, his Red Flame, his elemental, his muse. Every magician must have a familiar, darling. That's one of the rules, you know—the rules of magic. I'm sure you've read your Golden Bough—the magician is always the king. But he gets his power from his queen. The priest needs the priestess, and the magician must have his familiar.

Flattery, 1 pt. spend. Jane Wolfe insists that the investigator is a kindred spirit and simply must come to the Church of Thelema tonight for the service in

Jack's honor. She promises to introduce the investigator to Wilfred Smith, the priest. She summons Helen Smith over to meet the investigator this instant, darling! and insists that she prevail upon the investigator to make sure that he or she agrees to come.

Oral History (core clue). She saw a great deal of potential in Jack when he and his wife Helen started coming to the meetings of the Agape Lodge in the late 30s. A great deal of potential, indeed. But so young, and so dream-ridden! Even after he had been named leader, he had no patience for it. Certainly he was no match for Wilfred Smith, who even suborned Helen to his side. It took Crowley himself, managing things at long distance from London, to drive Smith away. But then Vance Wimpole showed up, and that was the beginning of the end for poor Jack. **Follow-Up**: *How so?* Vance encouraged Jack's more metaphysical speculations, and Jack thought he had found in Vance a kindred spirit—as perhaps he had, though not quite as he might have thought. It turned out that Vance had started sleeping with Jack's girl Betty—she was Jack's ex-wife's sister, you know, how delightfully incestuous—at the same that he and Jack were engaged in the Babalon Working. Jack was torn. He felt jealous and betrayed (just like when Helen left him for Wilfred), but he needed Vance as his magical Scribe, he thought—and the Agape Lodge was supposed to be a haven for free love, so he had no right to be jealous, especially after he'd made peace with Wilfred over Helen. **Follow-Up**: T*he Babalon Working?* Yes, darling, that was Jack's name for the ritual he and Vance performed out in the desert. He thought he could conjure a goddess to "mother the Moon-Child," as he said. When Marjorie showed up soon afterward, Jack convinced her to join in some rather flamboyant sex magic at the Parsonage, thinking that she was the goddess he'd brought forth. Of course, nothing came of it. **Follow-Up**: What's a Moon-Child? A messenger from the Outer Gods, darling; a being of perfect love. Aleister wrote about it in the Book of the Law. **Follow-Up**: *So what happened to Vance Wimpole?* Well, things got very bad! Jack fronted Vance some ungodly amount of money so Vance could go to Florida with Betty to buy boats to bring back to California and sell. But of course he had no intention of ever coming back. Jack had to go down to Miami and summon an air elemental to stop them from sailing off into the Caribbean. It was the last straw; he resigned as leader of the Agape Lodge shortly thereafter. **Follow-Up:** *And then what happened?* Aleister was heart-broken; he'd had such hopes for the boy. He thought Jack's silly plan to create a Moon-Child was sheer foolishness, and so it proved; there was never any sign whatsoever that a wonderful child had come among us to lead us to a new age of freedom. Poor Aleister! It broke his heart, and he died of it! Funny that Jack was so eager to have some of Aleister's ashes after he died, and now he's naught but ashes himself. Life is like that, darling: the gods relish irony.

The Reporter (Omar Garrison)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Allow investigators to **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 4 to notice a wiry fellow in his early 30s wearing a cheap suit and taking notes in the back of the mourning chapel in a small notebook. The investigator who rolls lowest is buttonholed by Los Angeles Times reporter **Omar Garrison** (b. 1919, age 33), who will ask what an investigator knows about Jack's unusual religious or political activities. *As Garrison, adopt a skeptical expression and pretend to have a reporter's notebook and pad at the ready. Fire off questions with an ear cocked to listen to the answer. Say things like, "Is this on record, pal?" and "My editor will never buy it," and "What a scoop!"*

1. Did Parsons have any enemies that you knew of?

2. Did you know that in the 1930s and 40s Parsons belonged to a group called the Agape Lodge, associated with the diabolist Aleister Crowley?

3. Did you ever see Parsons perform any sort of devil-worshipping ceremony or ritual?

4. Were you aware that Parsons identified himself with the Anti-Christ?

5. Did you know that Parsons was under investigation by the FBI as a security risk, and that he was fired from his job at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory when his clearance was revoked?

6. Did you ever hear Parsons mention something called "*The Babalon Working*"?

If all the investigators successfully **Sense Trouble**, have the one who rolled highest overhear Garrison trying to interview Ed Forman or Marjorie Cameron—the answers will be protestations and demurrals. If Forman is either the interviewee or within earshot of another interviewee, he will at some point physically attack Garrison in a fit of rage; if not, you may at your option have Cameron shrilly beat at Garrison with her fists, similarly. **Assess Honesty** or a successful **Psychoanalysis** roll at **Difficulty** 4 allows an investigator to notice that it was the mention of the Babalon Working that set Forman or Cameron off. If Forman and Cameron are forced to interact, observers with **Assess Honesty** notice a strained and formal tension between them—hostile on Forman's part, hurt on Cameron's.

A **Bargaining, Flattery** or **Cop Talk** spend (this representing the use of a crime reporter's professional jargon) can get Garrison to reveal the "*two big leads I'm running down right now*."

Bonus Clue. Parsons was supposed to be a real careful worker, according to his friends at the powder factory where he worked. Did something happen that made him careless the day he died? [This clue points to the Burmite Powder Company, also mentioned in the news article.]

Bonus Clue. Where was his wife at the time of the explosion? She said she was running last-minute errands before they left for Mexico, but what "errand" did she have at the Santa Monica pier that day? Riding the merry-go-round? [Note that this clue is also available to investigators who inspect Cameron's car.]

Additionally, Garrison can reveal that he has an "inside source" with "*the real scoop on this mug Parsons*." This source, whom right now Garrison knows only as "the Commodore," is in fact a mendacious Vance Wimpole, who will paint Parsons as a sinister sex-crazed black magician who has set up his own cult in Pasadena devoted to free love and devil worship.

Oh That I Were Where Helen Lies (Helen Smith)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Helen Smith

(b. 1911, age 41) is a short, slender woman who looks like she's in her mid-30s. Her dark eyes are alert and perceptive, and she projects an air of quiet concentration when she purses her lips and furrows her brow, which she does quite often. *To play Helen, imitate her pouting moue. Speak politely and circumspectly, with carefully precise diction*. She is sad about Jack's death, but she isn't surprised; he was pursuing things that were far beyond him. "*Jack was just a boy, playing at being a magician. He was interested in freedom, but not in responsibility. In a magician the two must be in perfect balance. Wilfred—my husband—tried to teach him, but beyond a certain point he just couldn't learn.*"

Helen will approach one of the science fiction writers among the investigators; she may be able to draw upon a previous acquaintance. "So, how is the science fiction business?" she will say. Eventually, she will probe: *"Do you ever hear from your old friend Vance Wimpole?"* or something similar (This may be another opportunity for a Wimpole-related flashback, if you have the time). She will pump one or more investigators with respect to their attitude toward Vance Wimpole, and then if they are no warmer than non-committal implore them calmly to come to her home at 2140 Beachwood Avenue in North Hollywood that evening to talk about a matter of extreme importance in which only they can help—if appropriate, push this as a soft Driver for Dick or Boucher. Otherwise, ask them to show up later in the evening—"*It will be no trouble*," Helen says. "*We keep odd hours*"—or even the next day. **Assess Honesty** can hint at her motivation: she needs help with a sensitive or potentially embarrassing matter, and she's being cagey about sharing it with outsiders.

Oral History. Betty has always been trouble! First she stole Jack from me—but that was all right, since my marriage was ending anyway—and then she snuck off on Jack with Vance. In between she warmed every bed in the Parsonage, Jack's bohemian boarding house on Orange Grove Avenue. But none of it ever made her happy, and now she's bitten off more than she can chew. She's married, and she has a child, and she's no longer young enough to go hopping from bed to bed. And Vance, her husband, is quite, quite insane. So she's really in quite a fix. I'd laugh, but she's my sister, and I love her, and I want to help her.

Reassurance. Helen wants to help extricate her sister Betty from her troubled marriage, but the involvement of the police may prove embarrassing to her husband's church at the very least. The investigator knows Betty's intractable husband, and so may have useful advice for dealing with him.

Her son **Kwen Smith** (b. 1943, age 9) is with her, a solemn boy with short dark hair and his mother's finely sculpted features. He will not volunteer any information; he looks shy and a little scared. A 1-point **Reassurance** spend might get him to reveal that his cousin Alexis is staying with them at their house—"*Well, we live at the church*"—and Mommy is mad at Aunt Betty.

Forrie Sneaks Out (Forrie Ackerman)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

The investigator with the least amount of business occupying his or her attention notices Forrie Ackerman slip out the door. **Follow-Up**: Forrie leaves the funeral home proper and follows the breezeway into the larger building, a mortuary and crematorium in which he locates a pay phone and leaves a message for Wimpole. He returns about ten minutes later; if asked about his momentary disappearance, he will say he had to make a phone call. Pressed further, perhaps via **Intimidation** or **Bargaining**, he will claim that he was upset by the wake and had called to schedule a Psychohistorical assessment. **The Truth**: Forrie was relaying information about what happened at the funeral home, including Marjorie Cameron's behavior at the wake, the presence of the investigators there

and what he knows about them, and anything else that seems relevant. He now has orders to bring Jack's ashes to the "Friendship Org" at the Psychohistorical Foundation in Los Angeles.

Returning along the breezeway, Ackerman stops and looks out into the parking lot, as if he's noticed something, and then ducks comically behind one of the narrow pillars that holds it up and peers out again, as if scouting out the scene. Following his gaze, the investigator spots what has gotten his attention: a dark non-descript sedan in which sit two men in suits and dark glasses. One is reading a newspaper. The other is drinking coffee from a paper cup.

When Forrie returns, he will be very excited tell one of the investigators that he thinks the Feds are watching the funeral. If confronted, the FBI agents—for such they are: Special Agents Brown and Porter—will be polite but brusque, utterly unforthcoming. "*I'm sorry, sir. This is a national security matter. I'm not permitted to say any more.*" They are both young and fit, clean-cut and serious.

Skills: **Athletics** 8, **Drive** 6, **Firearms** 6, **Health** 6, **Scuffling** 6. They will try to follow Marjorie Cameron and keep tabs on her until she gets home; they want to know who she's meeting with.

If necessary to get the action moving, Marjorie Cameron will overhear Ackerman and she or her brother will ask the investigators to help get her away from the funeral home without the FBI agents following her. Robert Cameron will follow the investigators' lead and agree to do his bit in any sensible plan. Note that Forrie Ackerman is motivated to help out as well—albeit for ulterior motives.

Drive in the Desert

It is still light when one or more investigators leave the wake with Marjorie Cameron. The sun doesn't set until 8:08 pm tonight (and for the next few days) as the summer solstice approaches (**Astronomy** lets an investigator know precisely when sunset will occur). Marjorie Cameron's car is a light blue 1948 Chevy convertible with a trailer hitch. The keys are on a rabbit's-foot keychain that also has keys to (**1**) the carriage house apartment and (**2**) the laundry room/laboratory at 1071 S Orange Grove Avenue as well as (**3**) her mother-in-law's apartment at 21 West Glenarm Street. During the ride, she will seem nervous and edgy, on the verge of utter exhaustion. **Streetwise** or **Assess Honesty** allows an investigator to notice her nervously adjusting her stocking (really, reaching for the flask of space mead to take the edge off).

Evidence Collection (core clue). There is a scrap of paper on the dashboard; it looks like a parking pass or something (give this clue to the driver automatically, even if he or she does not have **Evidence Collection**). In the back seat is a picnic basket. There is a camera in the glove-box. **Follow-Up**: The scrap of paper is an undated parking pass for a lot on the Santa Monica Amusement Pier. The picnic basket holds three wine-glasses, a bottle of wine, a bottle opener a cheese knife, some sour-looking grapes, stale crackers, and a block of hardened cheese as well as a half-empty pack of cigarettes and a book of matches. "*We were going to have a picnic once we got on the road,*" Marjorie will explain.

Photography. The camera shows that it has 21 shots remaining. If developed, there are three photos on the roll. (**1**) The first shows a dusty meadow with grass and scattered scrub pine; in the background is a snow-covered mountain peak. Parsons is in the picture, peering into a surveyor's theodolite. (**2**) The second picture is a close-up of a flower, framed against a wooden sign that says, "Henninger Flats Woodland Nursery—Los Angeles County Fire Department." (**3**) The third picture is a mountain landscape that includes shows a tall structure that looks something like a water tower at first glance; closer inspection shows that the "water tank" is actually an observatory dome.

Reassurance. You know what his last words were? 'But I'm not done yet.' Not done yet! Oh, Jack! We were going to go to Mexico after—we were going to go to Mexico. I'd found the perfect place, a little city on the Gulf of Mexico named Catemaco. It's wonderful. There's an artists' colony on the edge of town, and every year the town holds a *fiesta de brujos* with folk healers and fortune tellers and all sorts of wonderful things. I've even sold some of my paintings there. Now I don't know what to do.

Assess Honesty. She said, "*We were going to go to Mexico after—*" but then she corrected herself. After what? What is she hiding?

Oral History (core clue). "Jack was the white magician and Vance was black. Two forms of witchcraft in contention, one dedicated to the bright goddess Siobnoghurach and the other to the dark god of chaos, Azatao. Babalon against Horus. Lovecraft versus hatecraft, versus fearcraft. And Chaos was winning. The Moon Child wouldn't come, even though we tried and tried. But then Jack figured out why. It was the space mead that helped him! The magicians of Catemaco taught us the secret! And Jack saw! He saw how the Temple of Azatao could be brought low, and Azatao himself chained, so that the star of the Moon Child might shine forth."

Occult. The names come from British occultist Aleister Crowley's work. He wrote a book that was supposedly

dictated by a spirit-possessor speaking through him while he was visiting Egypt in the 1920s.

Theology. Cameron seems to be describing a sort of Manichean cosmology of two equal but opposing deities, one male and one female, with the Moon Child as the messianic mediator between them.

I Know What To Do!

At some point during the conversation, Marjorie will suddenly become excited. She says, "*I know what to do! We'll ask Jack!*" She will attempt to persuade an investigator to serve as the magician for the ritual; if more than one investigator is present, she will inveigle another to help the magician by serving as his or her familiar. "T*rust me! I need your help! I'll teach you everything you need to know.*"

If the investigator is not persuaded, Marjorie tells the investigator to just drop her off at home (her mother-in-law's apartment on West Glenarm Street in Pasadena). She says the investigator can just bring the car by in the morning (Note that Forrie will abduct her and steal the ashes in the meantime). She asks the investigator to help her bring the ashes inside the house. Otherwise, she tells the investigator to drive east along Route 66, and then turn south to follow a little traveled back road.

As the car heads out into the Mojave, have the driver roll **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 4 to notice that they are being followed. Winning a **Drive** contest (versus Forrie Ackerman's **Drive** skill) allows the investigator to identify the trailing car as Ackerman's and either lose the tail or confront him. If confronted, Forrie Ackerman will claim to have followed Cameron's car because he was worried for some reason—that the driver would get lost, that the car was being driven erratically and Forrie wanted to make sure they were all okay, or some such excuse; **Assess Honesty** will in all cases reveal the rationale to be a pathetic deception. Forrie will be curious about what Cameron and the investigator(s) are up to, and want to tag along. If rebuffed, he will withdraw.

Cameron will direct the investigator to a place in the desert to park at the base of some rocks. From the trunk of the car, she will remove a fencing foil and a flashlight. She also pulls the picnic basket out of the back seat and puts Jack's urn in it. A short walk up into the rocks brings them into a kind of box canyon ringed with tall stone spires shaped vaguely like totem poles. **Geology** will remind an investigator that these are wind-formed structures, called "hoodoos," created when erosion sculpts the softer stone sandwiched between layers of harder rock.

I Am The Flame

Marjorie Cameron will explain the basics of neo-Enochian magic (see the sidebar on page page 26). She then tells the magician (and familiar, if there is an investigator suitable to the purpose; otherwise, Marjorie will be the familiar) that to be invested as a magician requires a short ceremony where they take on the roles of Priest and Priestess. Marjorie will give the Priest and Priestess sips of space mead.

First, the Priest brandishes sword (i.e., the fencing foil) and flame (a lit cigarette). He speaks the Words of the Priest; if necessary, Marjorie Cameron will coach ("Repeat after me . . .").

The Words of the Priest. *I am the flame that burns in every heart of man. I am the flame that burns in the core of every star. I am Life, and the giver of Life. And so am I the knowledge of death. I am alone; there is no God where I am.*

Next the Priestess divests herself of her clothing, and speaks the Words of the Priestess. Again, if necessary Marjorie Cameron will coach.

The Words of the Priestess. *To love me is better than all things! If under the night-stars in the desert thou burnest thy incense, then I shall be with thee. Come before me with a pure heart, and the serpent flame burning within! Put on the wings, and arouse the coiled splendor within you! Come unto me! Sing the rapturous love-song unto me! Burn to me perfumes! Wear to me jewels! Drink to me, for I love you!*

The Priest replies, "*Love is the law, love under will*," and the Priestess says, "*Do what thou wilt, shall be the whole of the law.*" Then both say, "*Aumyn*." The Priest puts aside his implements. The Priest and the Priestess embrace. They will feel a striking energy pass between them; both should make a **Stability** test at **Difficulty** 5. Anyone who fails the roll loses 3 points of **Stability**. But if both succeed, they may roll 1d6 and add that amount to the **Stability** pool (not the rating—this is a temporary feeling of elation and empowerment) of each character.

Mors Obit

"*Now,*" Marjorie says, "*to call Jack.*" She opens the urn with his ashes and takes out a handful, casting them upon the head of the magician.

The key that Marjorie Cameron will teach the magician is called "*Mors Obit*," which means "*Death is dead*" in Latin. These are the first two lines of the key. The remainder of the key doesn't quite make sense; it might mean something like "the porch is built," or "I straighten the walkway." Its signature is non-Euclidean architectural weirdness; a typical side effect is a waking nightmare of being lost in a shadowy space of bizarre angles hunted by half-glimpsed figures.

M	O	R	S
O	B	I	T
R	I	G	O
S	T	O	A

She prepares the Brimful Chalice, or shows the familiar how, and directs the magician to begin. If the magician succeeds, he is possessed by the spirit of Jack Parsons, who will speak through the investigator's mouth in an eerie manner. If he fails, you may opt to have the possession still take place—perhaps it is the familiar who is possessed, or perhaps the **Stability** tests it engenders are more difficult or more severe—or you can simply decide that the clue is not revealed; it is not essential to the adventure, after all.

The Ghost of Jack Parsons (bonus clue). "*It is cold, cold, beyond the stars. They seeped down long ago, long ago they came from the stars. The Scribe knows them! He speaks for them now, since he was corrupted in the Babalon Working! O Babalon! Remember what he said to me! Here in this place it was! This very place! 'Babalon feeds on the death of men—she shall absorb thee, and thou shalt become living flame before she incarnates.' Now his soul burns with the fire of their Daemon Sultan, and the beating of his heart sounds their cry, 'Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!' Oh, he is a foulness! He has found the painting that you set down and gave to the witch in Mexico. He is learning things from it. He has brought his sword into the harbor, and there he plots. He thinks to spite Azatao in my stead, that the man may rule the god, that the man may bank the fire in his heart at whim! But he knows not that Moon Child has come! She is yet hidden from him, as from me! But she is close! Ah, yes, so close! Woe, woe, woe, if he should find her! It is dark here; I am in darkness. The fire burned me; the Scribe sent the fire; truly he has grown strong! Truly he has grown strong.*"

Do not forget to impose **Stability** tests at **Difficulty** 5 for creepy possession effects as Parsons in the body of the magician lurches and staggers around. Marjorie Cameron will lose her composure and weep helplessly, clinging to a hoodoo stone. She will take a stiff belt of space mead—a full dose!—and continue to cry for Jack.

You may justify imposing side effects on the ritual automatically because the investigators drank the space mead. The investigators experience these side-effects as a living nightmare of being pursued through dark labyrinths by unseen and silent but inexorably approaching monsters. This should take the game-mechanical form of a series of tests at **Difficulty** 5 in which the investigator may spend **Athletics** or **Fleeing**; after each failure, the investigator loses 1 **Stability.** Roll a d6 after each failure; the nightmare ends if the roll is equal to or less than the number of previous failures.

Forrie Ackerman may witness the magical ceremony. He may try to steal the urn with the ashes of Jack Parson now, or wait and try to do it later. In either case, he will slip away unnoticed if the investigators fail a **Sense Trouble** roll—**Difficulty** 6 if he's just observing from the rocks above, **Difficulty** 4 if he has to actually sneak in among the investigators to try to grab the urn.

After you've gotten enough mileage out of this scene, you want to (a) get Marjorie away from the investigators so that she can disappear—either kidnapped by Ackerman, murdered by Forman, or abducted by unleashed extra-dimensional forces—and (b) get the investigators here back together with any of their colleagues who went to the Church of Thelema.

The Church of Thelema

One or more investigators are invited to attend the Thelemite memorial service at 6 o'clock in the evening of June 19.

It is usually at least a 50 minute car ride from the funeral home in Monrovia to the Church of Thelema in Hollywood; investigators traveling on the freeway during rush hour will almost certainly take longer. The Spanish hacienda-style house at 2140 North Beachwood Avenue is surrounded by a high hedge that obscures the grounds within.

Kwen Smith opens the door for visitors and offers to take their hats. Tagging along after him is a little girl, a toddler of two or three years of age. "*That's my cousin Alexis*," Kwen will say. "*I'm watching her during the service for Uncle Jack*."

Flattery (core clue). Alexis's mother is Kwen's Aunt Betty; he does not know who her father is, only that he's a bad man. **The Truth:** The little girl is Alexis Wimpole; her father is Vance Wimpole. Her mother Betty Wimpole is seeking refuge from Vance Wimpole with Betty's sister Helen Smith.

After a moment, an older woman, maybe in her sixties, clearly the nanny—Kwen calls her "Aunt Mary"—comes to take the children and give them their dinner.

Entering the Temple

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

The foyer opens into an airy, naturally lit hall with white walls and a dark tiled floor. At its far end is an elegantly paneled set of double doors. On the right is an open closet in which hang what appear to be hooded white choir robes. On the left, a round white shield hangs in the middle of the wall. Below the shield is a pair of decorative crossed swords (note that these may be pulled off the wall and used to fight).

The Sator Square (core clue). The shield bears a starburst-like symbol traced in black (**Occult** recalls that this is the unicursal hexagram of the Church of Thelema, a symbol of his creed devised by Crowley), with the words "SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS" inscribed in a circle on its rim (see sidebar on page page 15). Investigators may wish to take a few moments to puzzle over the words on the shield **Cryptography** sees that the phrase is a palindrome; **Archaeology** remembers that the sentence was found preserved as graffiti on the walls of Pompeii in the form of a square, and that some degree of uncertainty accompanies attempts to interpret its meaning. Latin translates the phrase somewhat awkwardly as "Farmer Arepo works a wheeled plow." **Occult** associates the Sator square with the worship of Mithras in ancient Rome, and a 1 point spend will allow the occultist to correct the translation as, "Horus the Sower bears toil and torment."

Present are Jane Wolfe, clad in a robe of black, and about a dozen other people of various ages in white robes. Wolfe will invite the investigators to don their own white robes, explaining that she will take on the role of Deacon during the service. The Thelemites are in the main middle age or older, although there are a handful of children present as well (see **Meet the Thelemites**). "*We are just waiting for the Priest and Priestess to ready themselves*," someone will explain to an investigator.

One woman stands slightly apart from the others, who seem to be studiously ignoring her. This is **Betty Wimpole** (b. 1923, age 29), Helen Smith's younger sister, a tall, outdoorsy blonde in her late 20s. She looks harried and distraught, as if she's just barely keeping it together. She will react suspiciously to any attempt at interaction.

Meet the Thelemites

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

In addition to Jane Wolfe and Betty Wimpole, the "cultists" assembled here include **Ray Burlingame** (age 59), corpulent mystic; his wife **Mildred** (age 38), formidable matriarch; their daughter **Laylah** (age 9), impish waif;

Out of the Mouths of Babes

If time permits, it can be amusing in play to confront an investigator with a child or teen, especially if you are prepared to role-play a toddler's naked ego and limited vocabulary, for example, or a teen-ager's truculent self-absorption. You can require a **Reassurance** spend to placate a child who is frightened, upset, or angry, or a **Flattery** spend to get one who is shy or recalcitrant to open up. **Credit Rating**, interpreted as pop-cultural cool, may be the only thing that is capable of impressing a teen. The information provided by a child can include family secrets and half-understood gossip, delivered with an ingenuous artlessness that masks its import.

JEROME
2011

Phyllis Seckler (age 35), serene earth mother-type; her children **Stella** (age 15), dark-eyed ingénue; **Lisa** (age 13), awkward poetess; **Paul** (age 9), little hellion; **Georgia Schneider** (age 45), sickly neurasthenic; **Louis Culling** (age 58), leering mountebank; **Meeka Aldrich** (age 49), stage-gypsy astrologer; and **Maria Prescott** (age 61), embarrassingly ancient doxie. Men are addressed as "frater" (brother) and women as "soror" (sister). They should come across as eccentric and ill-adapted. Note that in convention play or other single-session game you will have little time to play them out. In that case, give each investigator the opportunity to declare the use of a single Investigative ability and merely report the results.

Anthropology. This group espouses a philosophy of free love and open marriage but much of their conversation revolves around the hurt feelings and bad blood occasioned by the criss-crossing dalliances of its married and unmarried members. Parsons is a case in point: his marriage to Helen fell apart as Jack began to sleep with Helen's sister Betty, among his numerous other affairs; Betty then ran off with Vance, and Helen divorced Jack and married Wilfred Smith after having his baby. Parsons seems to be regarded as something of an apostate, having espoused heretical views about a Thelemite Messiah, in which these people do not believe.

Occult. The Church of Thelema is a form of non-Christian Gnosticism, emphasizing the individual's personal spiritual journey in an imperfect world through the metaphor of "magick," in which the magician (i.e., the person) is the locus at which the material force of Chaos (e.g., ego-death, physical dissolution, entropy) contends with the ineffable influence of Abomination (that is to say, consciousness itself, directed willfully and perversely). The product of that contest is the mastered self, capable of potent acts of will. (2 pt. spend) The investigator gains a point of **Cthulhu Mythos** for talking to the Thelemites at great length and with extreme intensity. Note that this cost may be borne in combination with **Theology**, such that Mythos skill can be gained by spending two points of **Occult**, two points of **Theology**, or one point of each.

Oral History. This group, to which Parsons once belonged, has had a history of poisonous in-fighting beginning from its origins in the late 1920s, when Wilfred Smith came from Canada with two other adherents of Aleister Crowley per his instructions to establish the Agape Lodge in California. Parsons left the group after a number of personal, professional, and magical setbacks, including the failure of the Babalon Working that was supposed to help him create a messianic Moon-Child but which only got him Marjorie.

Theology. Their cosmology resembles that of the witch-cult in pre-Christian Europe, with a powerful but reactive male god called Azatao, whom they associate with the Egyptian deity Horus in all his multiplicity of contradictory forms (king of the sky, spirit of war, innocent child-god), and a slightly subordinate but active female goddess called Siabnoghurach, who is mainly identified with the "great harlot" of the *Book of Revelation*—that is, "Babalon"—but who seems to hearken back to the monstrous Babylonian fertility deity Tiamat as well as to the Egyptian goddess Isis. In a perverse echo of Christian doctrine, these two entities are themselves merely aspects of a greater unity called Iao-Soto, which encompasses, delimits and ultimately is the expression of their struggle. (2 pt. spend) The investigator gains a point of **Cthulhu Mythos** for talking to the Thelemites. Note that this cost may be borne in combination with **Occult** (see above).

The Sator Square

S	A	T	O	R
A	R	E	P	O
T	E	N	E	T
O	P	E	R	A
R	O	T	A	S

The "Sator Square" is a magical key of great power. Its signature is fire. With the Adornless Blade, it can be used to summon hurricane force winds in the area around the caster. With the Carven Stone, it can unleash earthquakes and other seismic activity in accordance with the local geology. With the Fiery Brand, it can cause mass rioting in urban areas. With the Brimful Chalice, it can give the caster such detailed knowledge of the future as to render him or her nearly insane. If all four instruments are used at once, as Jack Parsons intended for the Despite of Azatao, it will attract the notice of Azatao. Such an eventuality is likely to be disastrous, as the Daemon Sultan reaches out reflexively with a tendril of his power to swat the annoying stimulus.

An Unwelcome Interruption

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

When it is time for the service to begin, Wolfe leads those assembled through the double doors. The group passes across a portico encircling an open-air central courtyard that has been converted into a religious sanctuary; steps lead down into the courtyard itself. At its center, a black stone block about four feet high holds a small circular ceramic font. At the far end stand two obelisks, each about seven feet tall, the right one black and the left one white. Three steps tiled in black and white beyond the obelisks lead back to the portico, where an altar stands. It is a narrow table seven feet long covered with a crimson altar-cloth embroidered with a golden sunblaze emblem in the center of the drape. Upon it lies a slim leather-bound volume (see the Thelemite Tomes sidebar on page page 15) atop a small ornate wooden box; a ceremonial dagger with an ankh-shaped hilt rests upon the book.

Beyond the altar is the super-altar, an open framework of three shelves. It is shrouded with a long and diaphanous veil, through which can be seen various items of occult significance: a stone tablet at the top (closer examination will show that it is engraved with a Sator square), a crown in the middle, a chalice with roses at the bottom. Each is flanked by many candles. Standing near the altar is a woman clad in a green robe; this is Helen Smith garbed as the Priestess.

At the sonorous tones of a bell thrice ring by one of the Thelemite children, the service begins. Jane Wolfe, as deacon, leads the congregation in a recitation of the cult's credo: "*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the Law, love under will.*" Helen as the priestess blesses the congregation and calls, "*Come forth, O Man!*" At the rear of the temple, the coffin-door opens and a man in a black robe emerges. He is in his sixties but still hale, with craggy good looks and a healthy tan. This is Wilfred Smith (see sidebar on page page 22) in the role of priest. A child presents him with a ceremonial spear, and he makes his way through the congregation to stand before the priestess at the altar. He speaks the Words of the Priest (see **I Am The Flame**, page page 95). Helen disrobes and stands naked before him and the congregation as she speaks the Words of the Priestess. They embrace, and part, and the priestess regains her robe.

At this point, have the investigators test **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 4. On a failure, the investigator is rapt with attention to the service. Smith takes up a knife from the super-altar and goes to the priestess. He makes a small cut in her hand with the knife. The deacon then collects a few drops of the dripping blood in a chalice, into which she mixes some wine. On a success, though, the investigator is distracted by the muffled sound of voices coming from the other side of the door in the gathering hall outside the sanctuary. An investigator who slips out to see what's going on sees three strangers in the foyer along with Kwen Smith, Alexis Wimpole, and the nanny they met earlier.

The three men are Psychohistorians under orders from Vance Wimpole to get his wife back. They are **Frank Dessler** (b.1912, age 40), a hard-eyed and jowly looking thug; **Richard DeMille** (b. 1922, age 30), a slender intellectual with a high forehead and sensitive mien; and **Miles Hollister** (b. 1926, age 26), a good-looking young man with broad shoulders.

Frank Dessler

Psychohistorical Adept. Skills: Athletics 4, Scuffling 4, Firearms 6, Health 6, Psychohistory 6, Shadowing 6.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +2. Drive: Bad Luck (Frank makes poor decisions, like bringing along a pistol when he's on parole). Pistol (-1), Fist (-1). To play Dessler, tuck your chin into your chest and scowl. Glare menacingly as you speak.

Richard DeMille

Psychohistorical Adept. Skills: Athletics 4, Filch 4, Fleeing 8, Scuffling 4, Health 6, Piloting 6, Preparedness 4, Psychohistory 8, Weapons 4.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +2. Drive: Artistic Sensitivity (like his father Cecil B., Richard feels that he is an auteur in his own particular medium, which is social interaction). Fist (-1), Knife (-1). To play DeMille, raise your eyebrows and purse your lips. Make casual gestures in the air with one hand as you speak.

Miles Hollister

Psychohistorical Adept. Skills: Athletics 8, Drive 6, Mechanical Repair 6, Scuffling 8, Health 8, Psychohistory 4.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +2. Drive: Adventure (Miles just wants to be a part of something exciting). Fist (-1). To play Hollister, square your shoulders and put your hands on your hips. When you speak, grin and squeeze your fist with the other hand, punch the palm of one hand with the other, or crack your knuckles.

They have orders to get both Alexis and Betty; they think that if they grab the kid they can get Betty to come with them of her own free will. They will advise those who interfere to back off. "*See, we're friends of the little girl's father; he wants her back.*"

Meanwhile, the service inside continues. The priest drinks from the chalice, as does the priestess. The deacon then goes around to the members of the

congregation with the chalice, offering it to each in turn to drink from as the priest chants a litany of blessings. At some point, the service is interrupted by Kwen Smith running in to shout tearfully that "*The bad men are taking Alexis*!"

The Thelemite men will be for the most part pusillanimous and ineffectual except for Smith, who will try to intercede on behalf of his sister-in-law in the absence of investigator action and get punched in the face by a Psychohistorian for his troubles, rendering him *hors de combat* for the rest of the fight. Betty will scream and try to grab her child back from the Psychohistorians, but she will fail in the absence of investigator aid. "*Miles, how could you?*" she will sob. Hollister will look pained—he is smitten with Betty—but he will probably just tell Betty, "*Don't worry; I'll make sure it works out okay*" and follow his orders—although a sufficiently persuasive investigator may sense an opening and with a spend guarantee his defection. "*Now, now, you'd better come along with us, Betty, like a good girl,*" DeMille will say. "*After all, your loving husband is worried about you*."

They have a black sedan with California plates parked outside. If they get away, they most likely head for the Psychohistorical Foundation first, but eventually they will separate the girl from her mother and hide her—on the yacht, at Ackerman's, or in a sleazy motel in Azusa, say—to use her as leverage so that Betty will agree to serve as Wimpole's familiar during the Despite of Azatao.

The Priest of Thelema

Wilfred Smith (b. 1885, age 67) looks tanned, lean, and fit for a man of his age. Bald, he has high cheekbones and deep piercing eyes. There is an unsettling intensity to his gaze, and he speaks in a clipped and precise fashion that makes him sound cool and dispassionate. An investigator who interacts with him undergoes a 1 pt. **Stability** test at **Difficulty** 3 for each separate interaction; the investigator can lose a maximum of 3 points from these encounters. He doesn't believe that Jack was a powerful or skilled enough magician for the Babalon Working to succeed; he thinks that Marjorie is foolish and deluded. "*The perils of magick are many,*" he will tell the investigators. "*It is surrounded by a charlatan's web of chicanery and illusion to entrap the weak-willed and foolish-minded and prevent them from coming to know the true secrets*." Jack thought that the Babalon Working had brought Marjorie to him as his "Scarlet Lady." More likely, Vance Wimpole, as Jack's "Scribe" (i.e. familiar) employed her as his confederate in a scheme to dupe Jack. He doesn't know what Jack was working on before his death—he thinks that whatever it was, it probably resulted in an eruption of his sublimated death-wish.

Use Smith as a source of magical information should the investigators pursue that line of investigation. Otherwise, he will simply be another voice pointing the investigators at Vance Wimpole and counseling against involving the police.

The Aftermath (Betty Wimpole)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

The Thelemites are in an uproar following an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt, doubly so if the attempt is successful. If police are called, accusations and counter-accusations will fly, and everyone who threw a punch will spend the night in jail in the absence of a good **Cop Talk** spend. A **Law** or **Credit Rating** spend can get an investigator released on bail after several hours, however. Vance Wimpole's lawyers are good, and will exert pressure to make the police treat the whole thing as a misunderstanding, with Wimpole as the concerned husband and Betty the willful and flighty wife. Allow an investigator with an idea for a creative **Law** or other spend to hamper Wimpole in some way—keep one or more the adepts in jail for a longer period, for example.

Ideally for your purposes, both Betty and Alexis will have been abducted. In that case, Helen Smith will implore the investigators for their help. If only Alexis has been taken, Betty will do the imploring. If neither has been taken, they will nonetheless fear another attempt and ask the investigators to "talk to Vance and make him see reason." In either of the latter circumstances, the investigators will probably want to hear Betty's story. To play Betty, vamp it up a little bit. Pout coyly, simper, and suck the tip of your thumb.

Betty's Story (core clue). We needed money after Vance's boat-buying scheme went bust. But then he got the bright idea to start his own religion, or something like one. Where he came up with some of that stuff, I'll never know. I helped him write it all down; it was a gas. Of course, once I got pregnant, Vance went a little crazy, and it stopped being all that much fun. We had some great big fights. But the money was

pouring in, and after Alexis was born it got better for a little while. Then a few months ago, Vance bought a yacht and told me we were going for a cruise. It was a nightmare. He would keep me and the baby locked up for hours at a time, and then he'd have me out for long, long assessment sessions where he wouldn't let me sleep. Then he'd lock me back up with a bottle of sleeping pills—he wanted me to O.D. on the pills! I was begging him to just let me go. Then about two weeks ago, we docked at a small city along the Gulf of Mexico near Veracruz called Catemaco, which is apparently some big watering hole for Mexican magicians; there's an American artists' colony there, too. I tried to get away, but no one would help me and the sailors found me and brought me back. Vance went ashore and went into one of the little "sorcerer's shops" they have there called a *tienda del brujo*. We set sail that afternoon, steamed down to the Panama Canal, and raced back up to California. When Vance left the ship, I figured out where we were. I snuck off and headed for my sister's house. **Follow-Up**: The name of his yacht is the *Excalibur*; it's anchored in the Santa Monica Harbor, near the pier. But I don't think he's there now.

Oral History (1 pt. spend). An investigator who follows up on Betty's claim to have helped write down the material that became Psychohistory can pump her for details, and she will provide a précis of the book (equivalent to skimming; see the **Psychohistory** sidebar, on page page 21). Additionally, she can reveal some of the "deeper truths" of Psychohistory.

Thelemite Tomes

There are two resource tomes available in this adventure. They may be obtained at the Church of Thelema; alternately, investigators may find them (a) aboard Wimpole's yacht, the Excalibur; (b) in Forrie Ackerman's house, the "Ackermansion"; (c) in an occult bookstore, with a **Bargaining** or **Credit Rating** spend, or (d) in a special collection (perhaps the academic library at Caltech, for example) with a **Library Use** or **Bureaucracy** spend.

The Book of the Law, by Aleister Crowley

The *Liber al vel Legis* is kept on the super-altar in the sanctuary of the Church of Thelema, protected from the elements by an ornate wooden box. Other copies can be found via **Bargaining** or **Library Use** spends in an occult specialty bookshop or library collection; the 1925 Tunis edition is extraordinarily rare, with only 11 copies printed, but the 1938 edition privately published by the Ordo Templi Orientis in London and New York is somewhat more common. This dense and allegorical work provides the cosmological background of Thelema, the mystical Gnostic religion to which Crowley (and Parsons) subscribed. It can be skimmed in about a day (or 1 pt. **Library Use** spend) or pored over in about a week (or a 2 pt. **Library Use** spend). Skimming provides a basic understanding of its contents. "*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law,*" is its thesis. "*Love is the law, love under will*." It announces the Aeon of Horus, which it envisions as a great oppressive spirit of Chaos that seethes at the center of the universe—"*the blind mad dreaming god*," as Crowley says. It imagines a countervailing spirit, inchoate but nonetheless real, called by various names, including Babalon, Isis, Ra-Hoor-Nuit, Siabnoghurach, and many others. The union of Horus and Babalon brings to life the Moon-Child who is the soul and messenger of the Outer Gods, and who completes the "opening of the way" for the universal being Iao-Soto. Poring over this book provides 1 pt. of **Cthulhu Mythos** and 1 pt. of **Occult**.

The Book of Magick, by Aleister Crowley

This privately published monograph may be found in Smith's robing room at the Church of Thelema as well as in some occult bookstores. It details the principles of neo-Enochian "magick," a quasi-Qabbalistic mystic system for invoking the "elementals" and "principals" of the æther. It can be skimmed in about a day (or 1 pt. **Library Use** spend) or pored over in about a week (or a 2 pt. **Library Use** spend). Skimming provides a basic understanding of the neo-Enochian magical system works. See the section on **Neo-Enochian Magic**, page page 118. Poring over it provides a dedicated pool point of **Occult** useful for preparing or enacting neo-Enochian workings as well as a detailed understanding of its procedures.

PART TWO: DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS

In this part of the adventure, the investigators must make sense of the various threads of conspiracy hinted at the night before. Use NPCs like Robert Cameron, Omar Garrison, Forrie Ackerman, and Theodore von Kármán to provide leads if the investigators are stuck, confused, or going in circles.

In A Strange Land

These scenes are generally connected to locations mentioned in the newspaper article about Parsons' death (Handout #1, *Death of a Rocket Scientist*)

The Aztec Hotel (Monrovia)

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

The hotel is a fanciful concoction of vaguely Central American arabesques in relief on its white concrete walls. It is located on the main street in Monrovia. Its restaurant, The Elephant Bar, is a good place to meet for drinks or take a phone call. If Wimpole feels pressured by the investigators, he will send one or two men from Friendship Org to toss their rooms, intimidate them, kidnap one or more of them, or otherwise put pressure back on them. If captured and pressed to talk, they can reveal where they were supposed to report back to Wimpole—at the local Foundation chapter house, aboard the *Excalibur*, or at Henninger Flats, as needed for the timing of the adventure to work out.

21 West Glenarm Street-Ruth Parsons' Apartment (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/Alternate)

Before Jack's death, he and Marjorie Cameron were living at Ruth Parsons' garden apartment at 21 West Glenarm Street in Pasadena, a low U-shaped building around a grassy courtyard open to the street (each of the apartments has a different street number). If the investigators enter the house, they will notice (**Evidence Collection**) a vase full of dried Mexican morning glory flowers—the same sort of flowers as in **The Catemaco Painting** on page page 113.

But Cameron will have gone missing the night of Jack Parson's wake. The evidence here will be consistent with what you judge to be the most appropriate mode of her disappearance. (a) If Forrie Ackerman kidnapped her, her car will have been broken into, Parsons' ashes will be missing, and there will be signs of a struggle in the house, including a smashed pair of eyeglasses. Neighbors can report hearing something shortly after the time the investigators dropped her off and seeing a car matching the description of Ackerman's speeding off. (b) If she ran off to Mexico on her own (possibly after being confronted by Ackerman, who may or may not have been able to obtain Jack's ashes), then neighbors can report a cab arriving (she will have gone to the bus station). (c) If Ed Forman murdered her, there will be signs of a struggle but no evidence of forced entry. (d) If she disappeared as a side effect of the *Mors Obit* working, then there will be no obvious signs that anything is wrong, nor will there be any indication of what might have happened or where she might have gone.

125 North Rampart Boulevard-Robert Cameron's House (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

Parked in the back of Robert Cameron's small bungalow-style house is a car trailer. It contains camping equipment, maps of Los Angeles County, Thelemite robes, archery gear, and surveyor's instruments as well as a five-gallon jar labeled '*Catemaco*' in grease pencil; the jar is half-filled with honey. There is also a cardboard box filled with a dozen unopened wine bottles, along with a loving cup-style fencing trophy with Jack's name on it from University High School, Pasadena. There are also vials of a grey salt-like powder stored in a padded box; **Chemistry** will reveal that this is mercury fulminate, a highly explosive substance. If an investigator without **Chemistry** searches the trailer, roll **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 5 to avoid an explosion; if it occurs, give everyone in range 1d3+3 wounds (roll **Athletics** at **Difficulty** 6 to halve the damage). The trailer is of course lost in those circumstances. One map is marked, with the location of Henninger Flats in the mountains between Pasadena and Mount Wilson circled in pencil. An old construction road runs into it from the south and then heads for the Mount Wilson observatory complex about three miles away.

1071 South Orange Grove Ave.-The House That Jack Blew Up (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

The tenants who lived in the carriage house at 1071 South Orange Grove Ave. are still there. They include Salvatore "Greg" Ganci, a painter, and Martin Foshaug, a student, both in their early 20s. Greg and Martin have been cleaning up—the landlord is paying them. They can report what they've told the police and the press. Jack and Marjorie had been getting ready for a long trip to Mexico; they said if they liked it they might not come back. They had a small trailer in the driveway outside the carriage house, and it was loaded up. It held camping equipment, art supplies, and some of Jack's special effects gear. At one point, Marjorie had gone out and Greg Ganci met Jack heading into the garage where he stored his chemicals with a 5 gallon

jug of some amber fluid. He said he needed to prepare a "rush order" for a client. "*Don't blow us up, Jack*," Ganci had joked. Half an hour later—this would be just after 5 o'clock, maybe 10 after—Ganci was in his apartment, which was over the laundry room, when he heard a loud blast and a hole appeared in his floor. He met Foshaug running downstairs, and the two of them found Jack with his arm blown off and half his face destroyed. He was still conscious, though barely, and trying to speak. Ganci leaned in close as the dying man clutched at him. "*He wanted to tell me something,*" Ganci says. "*But all I could make out was something like, 'the scribe . . . the scribe.' I don't know what it meant.*"

A search of the debris (**Evidence Collection**) will produce a **Scrap of Paper** (see handout on page page 113) that appears to have been written by Parsons.

Bermite Powder Company (Tujunga)

Scene Type: Clue (Alternate)

Tujunga is about 45 minutes northwest of Pasadena, along the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains. The investigators might come here following up a lead obtained from Garrison or the story he wrote (in which he misspelled the company's name). The Bermite Powder Company is located in an isolated box canyon outside of town.

Parsons was well-liked and well-regarded there, but had no close friends. He had a reputation as a wild man, and some of his co-workers thought that he had a tough time getting along in the stricter, more business-like climate that came with the end of the war. "*He'd probably have been happier back out in the Arroyo Seco with the rest of those 'Suicide Squad' boys, firing rockets just for the hell of it,*" one will say. "*But those days are gone*."

The do recall that he talked about "going to Mexico" a lot in the past few months; apparently his wife had spent some time at an artist's colony in a town down there on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico that she really liked. They have no knowledge of any special or secret project that he might have been working on. "*But you know who you should talk to? Von Kármán at Caltech!*" And someone will add, "*He did just buy a whole bunch of fulminate of mercury. He said it was for a special effects explosion for some sci-fi movie filming up in the mountains*." Another will add, "*Right. I think they were going to shoot some scenes near the observatory; I saw Jack looking at some pictures of it once*." **Follow-Up**: The Hale Observatory is about an hour away by car, up in the middle of the San Gabriel Mountains.

The Arroyo Seco (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

The investigators may come to this dry riverbed on the western edge of Pasadena where Jack Parsons and the rest of the Suicide Squad used to test their rockets, now part of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, for a number of reasons. They may be searching for the rocket that Jack was building, or for Marjorie Cameron's body. Wimpole's men may try to lure them out here to deal with them. Betty Wimpole or Wilfred Smith may bring them out here to enact a neo-Enochian ritual.

While here, one of the investigators runs into a rattlesnake. **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 6 (**Difficulty** 4 if the investigator has Outdoorsman). On a failure, the investigator is bitten. Once bitten, the victim is hurt and must make a **Health** roll every three hours versus a **Difficulty** of 4 to avoid becoming seriously wounded, and then every six hours thereafter to avoid dying once seriously wounded. **First Aid** can be used to treat the bite; allow pool points of **First Aid** to be spent on the victim's **Health** roll. The nearest hospital is in Pasadena. A seriously wounded investigator may begin to hallucinate; the hallucinations could include a visit from the ghost of Jack Parsons.

The Los Angeles Times Building (Central L.A.)

Scene Type: Clue (Alternate)

The headline in Friday's paper reads, *"SLAIN SCIENTIST PRIEST IN BLACK MAGIC CULT."* The article is salacious and lurid, implying that Parsons was a devotee of notorious English diabolist Aleister Crowley and ran a Satanic sex cult in Pasadena in the Thirties and Forties. It contains some factual errors, including the assertion that Parsons' mystic mentor Wilfred Smith died in 1948. It is illustrated with photos of Parsons in dark robes embroidered with occult symbolism (an investigator with **Occult** will recognize the imagery as indicating the wearer as a neo-Enochian priest and alchemist). This may prompt investigators to seek out its author, Omar Garrison—the reporter they met at Parsons' wake. **Cop Talk**, **Flattery**, or a bribe (i.e., **Credit Rating** or **Bargaining**) can get him to reveal that, although his source is anonymous, he's supposed to meet him again tonight to get more pictures for a follow-up story. Such a meeting may lead the investigators to the source Garrison knows as "the Commodore" (Vance Wimpole) or one of his flunkies.

Going to the Police (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/ Alternate)

In general, the police will not be helpful. Parsons had a long record with the Pasadena police: rockets and other explosives going off in the Arroyo Seco, wild parties on Orange Grove Ave., accusations of witchcraft and salacious activities, like a naked pregnant women jumping through a ring of fire in some sort of weird ritual sometime in the 1940s.

The death of Parsons seems like an accident. Ace criminologist Don Harding will brusquely dismiss any attempt to assert otherwise. He is precise, professional, and scientific. His report shows that the explosion occurred at 5:08 p.m. on June 17, followed shortly by a secondary explosion. No indications of rigged explosives were found: no wiring, timing devices, or fuse residue. Witnesses report Parsons' intention to "mix up a batch of chemicals" prior to departing on a vacation. Metal fragments consist with a coffee can containing traces of fulminate of mercury were found on the scene. Parsons most severe injuries were to his face and right arm.

Caltech (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

Theodore von Kármán (b. 1875, age 77) can be found in his office at Caltech in Pasadena. He is a wizened little gnome of a man with a beak of a nose and wavy white hair brushed back from his temples. Play von Kármán with your version of a broad central European accent: shortened vowels, "d," "t," or "z" for "th," "w" for "v," and so forth. "*Ah, yiss, Chack's dett iss wery zad . . . Parzuns vuz a breelyunt man, but he had no deesaplinn!*"

Von Kármán will be reluctant to speak to investigators about his involvement in Jack Parsons' recent activities, but confronted with evidence or even the accusation that he condoned irrational explorations of the occult will feel compelled to justify himself (**Assess Honesty** will allow an investigator to note his prideful identification as a rational man of science).

Oral History. *Yiss, I em a zientist, chust like Chack wuss a zientist. And zientists must explain tings! Chune 24, 1947. Pilot in Washinkton State zees nine zaucer-shaped obchecks in de air. July 7, 1947. Farmer in New Mexico finds debris in hiss field; the Army says first, yiss, iss zaucer, then no, iss wedder balloon. May 11, 1950. Man in Oregon takes photographs of zaucer hanging ower hiss house. Zumting is goink on—and Chack is maybe de only one who can figure it out! Like Eddington zays, de uniwerse iss stranger zan we can imachine! Zere are tings out dere, and Chack says he will try to contact zem wit special rocket. Zo I help him.*

Architecture or **Evidence Collection** (bonus clue; leverage: unicursal hexagram). Leaving campus, an investigator notices a statue of George Ellery Hale (1868-1938) peering through a telescope at the center of a sun-dial. It is also decorated with zodiacal symbols, but what catches the investigator's eye is a version of the unicursal hexagram. **Astronomy** or **History** can reveal that Hale was one of Caltech's founders as well as the man responsible for the construction of several observatories in the area, including a solar observatory on Mount Wilson. **Bureaucracy** and **Credit Rating** (1 pt. spend each) allow an investigator to determine that the anonymous donor of the sun-dial was Jane Wolfe; she can reveal that he was a secret magician of great power whose efforts during the Great War almost single-handedly staved off a victory for the Germans, at least according to Aleister Crowley.

Library Use allows a biographical sketch of George Ellery Hale to be assembled. Born and raised in Chicago, attended MIT 1886-1892, achieved prominence as an astronomer. In receipt of a $10 million grant from Andrew Carnegie to build a new observatory, went to California and began to organize the Mount Wilson observatories near Pasadena in 1903. Worked tirelessly and energetically for many years to develop new techniques and make new discoveries in astronomy. By 1910, began to suffer from recurring attacks of "brain congestion," accompanied by physical pain, depression, and sometimes "confusion of thought." Eventually, ill health prevented him from enduring the harsh conditions of "the Monastery" (as the living quarters on Mount Wilson were called) and he built a small "solar laboratory" near Caltech to continue his researches.

If Von Kármán is present, he can tell investigators that he knew Hale personally, and can report that Hale was obsessed with Egypt to the point of mania. "*Ah, he wass ztrange man*," von Kármán will say. "*He once zays he build on Mount Wilson where he deed because elf told him to put it zere. Yiss, yiss, wery ztrange and wery zad.*"

The Solar Laboratory, built in 1924, is now a part of the Mount Wilson Observatories. It is a small T-shaped white building of rough plaster and vaguely Spanish Colonial style. The thick wooden door is 15 feet high and arched like a gate. Above it is a cast stone bas relief depicting a sun whose rays end in hands that each grasp a small hooded cross or ankh—as **Art History** reports, an Egyptian symbol of life; **Occult** associates the solar imagery with the god Horus. Working there now are the father-and-son team of Harold and Horace Babcock, who are working on a device to measure the magnetic field of the sun. They are currently testing the device, and are perturbed by a recent image it has produced in which the sun's magnetic field vaguely resembles a man's laughing face. The time stamp on the on the image is June 17, 5:16 p.m. **Astronomy** or one of the Babcocks (as part of his explanation of their research) reminds investigators that light from the sun takes 8 minutes to reach the earth.

The Foundation

The Ackermansion (Beverly Hills)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/ Alternate)

Investigators who want to get their hands on Forrie Ackerman will probably be able to find him at the "Ackermansion," his Beverly Hills dwelling. It is a squarish, high-walled hacienda-type house of a decent size. Inside there are many interconnected rooms with communicating passages and stairwells; it is not easy to navigate, especially as the rooms and halls are cluttered with sci-fi memorabilia from movies, magazines, comics, and books. There are shelves of paperbacks, racks of periodicals, framed prints and pictures on the walls, movie props and costumes in cases lining the hallways, rocketship models dangling on fishing line from ceiling hooks—it is a garish and overwhelming panoply of fandom. There is even a life-sized Dracula's coffin being used as a coffee table in the overcrowded living room.

The Ackermansion makes a good place to run a cat-and-mouse chase between Ackerman and the investigators. For the investigators to corner Ackerman, they must successfully **Sense Trouble** three times at a **Difficulty** of 4. However, each failure gives Ackerman a chance to pop up and launch a surprise attack—a whack with a pair of nunchuks, a handful of throwing stars, or even just a pushed-over bookshelf—before retreating again. The attack will strike home and do damage by weapon type unless the targeted investigator succeeds at "dodging" by rolling **Athletics** or **Fleeing** at **Difficulty** 5. After the third roll, they have him cornered (fail or succeed), they have him cornered. One player rolls Scuffling versus a random **Difficulty** equal to 1 die plus 3 (to represent Ackerman's **Scuffling**), while each investigator helping against Ackerman may contribute **Scuffling** to the player roll. If Ackerman wins, the difference between his roll and the player's is the number of points of **Health** damage that you can distribute among the participating investigators.

Once cornered and subdued, Ackerman can reveal the truth of his involvement with Wimpole and his conversion to Psychohistory. He can tell how Richard DeMille showed up at his house on Wednesday with an autographed copy of *Psychohistory* and instructions to go to Parsons' wake and get his ashes for Vance Wimpole. Ackerman will point the investigators to the Psychohistorical Foundation as the most likely place for Wimpole to be. He can also provide other clues as needed to get investigators back on the trail—possibly including even leading them to Henninger Flats himself. More likely, he will bring or direct them to the Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation.

The Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation (Hollywood)

The Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation is located at 206 South Hoover in Hollywood, a few blocks south of the Hollywood Freeway (US 101). It is a sprawling apartment building of whitewashed concrete poured into irregular angles and high walls, with numerous staircases and porches along its exterior, making the whole place look like a labyrinthine fortress looming brightly above the street.

Getting inside undetected requires **Locksmith** or an ability roll versus a **Difficulty** of 5 or 6 depending on the audacity of the investigator's plan, with the ability being used depending on the general nature of that plan: e.g., **Athletics** (to shimmy up the angle where two exterior walls meet and enter via an open window or porch), **Shadowing** (to sneak in behind someone entering the building), or **Disguise** (to pretend to be a deliveryman or building inspector or some other authorized person). In general, failure should result in the investigators gaining access but then being unmasked or discovered relatively quickly by psychohistorian flunkies who will try to apprehend them and bring them to the man in charge, **Al van Vogt** (see **The Man in Charge**, page page 107). At night, the place will be quiet but not wholly deserted—some Psychohistorians live in the building during training courses, and some of these will be detailed as guards.

Psychohistorian Flunkies.

Skills: Scuffling 3, Athletics 3, Drive 2, Health 4.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +1. Drive: Follower (These people are devoted to Psychohistory, and to Vance Wimpole. They come across as saccharine, mildly brainwashed, and phony. "*Psychohistory changed my life—for the better!*"; "*I'd give up anything to help Psychohistory*!"; "*My psychic engrainings no longer trouble me, thanks to Vance Wimpole!*" "*Mr. Van Vogt is an excellent assessor!*") . Fist (-1).

During normal business hours, a **Bureaucracy** or even a **Flattery** spend may allow someone to brazen his or her way past the receptionist at the front desk, who will otherwise keep them cooling their heels while she makes a number of phone calls (all the while looking askance at them). Eventually, van Vogt will send for them.

The upper floors are mainly living quarters for Psychohistorian trainees undergoing intensive training. On the

lower floors, there are small ad hoc classrooms and "interview rooms" complete with large reel-to-reel tape recorders where Psychohistorical assessments may be conducted. There are rooms filled with filing cabinets containing paper transcripts and summaries of the analyses, alphabetically by the subject's name, as well as tapes awaiting transcription.

There is a tape dated 6/17/52 (i.e., the day Parsons died) with the name "Wimpole" on it. On the tape, the voices of two men can be heard: van Vogt's relaxed baritone occasionally asking questions interspersed with a rapid, breathless voice, obviously Vance Wimpole.

Psychohistorical Assessment Session: 6:00 p.m., June 17, 1952, D.V. Wimpole, subject; A.E. van Vogt, assessor (**bonus clue**). [van Vogt opens the session with this identifying information and then starts to ask questions about Wimpole's Drive per the **Psychohistory** sidebar, but Wimpole interrupts] WIMPOLE: *Forget about that shit . . . I'm deep into it already. I met someone tonight, an artist I used to know during the war. I bought one of her pieces recently and tracked her down. It was deep, deep stuff. Don't tell me to calm down. I am calm. It showed me the way, the way to make the burning voice my slave. My old "partner," heh-heh. He did it to me, and now he's helping me undo it. That's right. That's right.*

Listening to the entire hour-long session provides the listener with 1 point of **Cthulhu Mythos**, at the cost of a 3-point **Stability** test at **Difficulty** 5. Wimpole explains his new Psychohistorical "theory": our souls are the cast-off detritus from the star-borne journeys of those called the Old Ones. We are reborn time and time again in corporeal shells, in kind of an inverse karmic cycle: copies of copies, we become pallid and feckless imitations, merely relict of our original Old One nature. Assessment can bring us back to the Old One we once were.

The main plot function of their visit to the Foundation, however, is to point the investigators at Wimpole's yacht, the *Excalibur*, now moored in the Santa Monica Yacht Harbor, off the Santa Monica Amusement pier. A variety of clues may point to this fact.

Accounting. The investigators find a bill from the Santa Monica Harbor Office dated June 18, 1952, for an anchorage permit for the SS *Excalibur* addressed to the "Friendship Foundation" at 206 South Hoover.

Bureaucracy (1 pt. spend). An investigator claims the authority of the "Friendship Org" to get the switchboard operator to talk: "*Mister De Mille called to say he was going down to the harbor to check in with the Commodore aboard the Excalibur, sir.*"

Evidence Collection. A scribbled phone message in a receptionist's wastebasket contains the cryptic note, "*4 men Santa Mon Y Harb carg unload f/Excalibur. Need truck.*"

The Man in Charge

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

If the investigators attempt to raid or infiltrate the place, they may eventually come face-to-face (either by capture or other means) with Al van Vogt, who runs the place under normal circumstances; Wimpole is an occasional and celebrated guest when he visits.

Al van Vogt (b. 1912, age 40), Master Psychohistorian is a hearty looking, well-dressed man with thick dark eyebrows that give him an intimidating appearance that is belied by a genial smile. He is an expert Psychohistorian, and he is the nominal leader of the Los Angeles branch of Psychohistory.

Skills: Athletics 2, First Aid 4, Health 4, Psychoanalysis 6, Psychohistory 10, Weapons 4.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +4. Fist (-1), Epee (-1). Drive: Scholarship (He wants Psychohistory to be recognized as an authentic science). To play van Vogt, smile indulgently as you speak, and strive for a broad, relaxed tone of voice. Change demeanor abruptly if van Vogt gets mad, though.

Van Vogt's main motivation is to preserve the reputation and the finances of the Psychohistorical Foundation—and Wimpole, he believes, is a drain on both. **Assess Honesty** can reveal his opinion, and allow investigators to surmise that he can be persuaded to help them.

Bargaining (1 pt. spend). Van Vogt agrees to help them find Wimpole if an investigator does something to advance Psychohistory, like write a blurb for the back cover of the next printing of the book, or give a testimonial to its effectiveness that can be used in print advertising for the Foundation.

In some circumstances, van Vogt will bring out fencing foils and masks and agree to tell them what he knows if one of them can defeat him in a duel. Roll a **Weapons** contest between the duelists. Allow other investigators to help; they may allow a duelist to re-roll a failure by succeeding at a roll versus a **Difficulty** of 4 using an ability they "narrate in": **Sense Trouble** to shout a warning, **Preparedness** to have given the duelist some caffeine pills or other stimulus as the match began, and so forth. Even if the investigator loses, van Vogt may see an opportunity to point him and his friends at Wimpole in a way that would remove him from the organization's leadership without harming Psychohistory.

Oral History. Van Vogt can tell the investigators that Wimpole arrived at the Foundation on Tuesday night, around 6:00 p.m. or so, and asked for an assessment session, during which Wimpole claimed to have

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uncovered the key to unlocking past life experience—a claim that van Vogt regarded as crazy. After the session, he sent Richard DeMille to acquire some supplies and equipment for him while he took Dessler and Hollister on a "secret mission." At that point, Van Vogt went home. Wednesday morning, when van Vogt returned at around 10 a.m., Wimpole and the Friendship Org were already present; there was an Army surplus jeep parked in back, loaded with supplies and camping equipment as well as an Army surplus radio set, pulling an empty flatbed trailer. Then around noon word came from Wimpole's boat the *Excalibur* that his wife Betty had left, taking their daughter Alexis with her. Wimpole flew into a rage and ordered that the crew be subject to "radical demotion"—"make 'em walk the plank!" Wimpole shrieked. Dessler headed off to the pier while DeMille was ordered to Forrie Ackerman's house with instructions for him. Meanwhile, Wimpole took Hollister with him on another "secret mission." Wimpole has not yet returned, but some of the Friendship Org men have been back and forth.

If the investigators haven't been to the yacht yet, van Vogt tells them where to find it. If they have, he can reveal overhearing one of the Friendship Org men say something about "Henninger Flats" on a recent visit. Alternately, he can capture them and then either bring them to Vance Wimpole under guard or put them on ice until they escape with a Locksmith spend or similar action.

Rocket to the Morgue

These scenes allow the investigators to find out about the rocket that Parsons and his co-conspirators were trying to build.

Evidence Collection. At some point on Friday, probably as the investigators are driving around the Los Angeles area, radio news will report that county police still have no leads in the case of a break-in at a local rocket motor manufacturer Aerojet, Inc. in Azusa sometime Wednesday night.

Ed Forman's House (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/ Alternate)

Forman lives with his wife Jeanne in a small house in a modest section of Pasadena; he is currently using vacation days from his job at Aerojet. If the investigators visit him, he or his wife can tell them about being accosted the night that Jack died by two goons that he thought were sent by Marjorie.

Forman may have gone to Marjorie Cameron's house—her mother-in-law's apartment—with the intent of getting the truth out of her after the wake. One of several possibilities exists; choose the one that suits the developing narrative best.

1. Cameron never returned home that night. Forman waited but eventually gave up and left.

2. Cameron was home when Forman arrived, and he confronted her. She tearfully confessed to meeting with Vance Wimpole the day that Jack died, but denied that she meant Jack any harm. He wanted to know where to find "the rocket from the painting" but she didn't know; she told him to ask Jack. "It's too late for that," she will say Wimpole told her. "I'll have to go ask his better half"—meaning Forman.

   (a) Enraged, Forman struck Marjorie. She fell, hit her head, and was killed. He panicked and dumped her body in the Arroyo Seco.

   (b) Disgusted, Forman called Marjorie a stinking whore and left.

3. Forman arrived in time to see Ackerman abduct Cameron and stuff her into his car. Forman followed them to the Ackermansion. When he foolishly attempted to sneak into the house to free her, Ackerman stealthily beaned him with a frying pan. Forman's wife can relate that he never returned home the night of the wake. His corpse is now hidden inside a replica of Dracula's coffin on the main floor of the Ackermansion.

Evidence Collection. Should the investigators be allowed to go into Forman's workshop in the garage and poke around, they will find a clip-on employee identification badge issued by the Aerojet Corporation with a picture of Parsons on it but a different name—"John Smith, Jr."

The Aerojet Corporation (Azusa)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

The Aerojet Corporation is listed in the phone book, and an address in the town of Azusa is provided. **Library Use** allows investigators to learn something of Aerojet's history. It was established by a team of Caltech rocket scientists that called itself the "Suicide

Squad" during World War II. This team included Parsons and von Kármán. They had a contract to build detachable rocket boosters for heavily laden airplanes that had to take off from short runways. After the war, most of the original founders were bought out by a larger defense contractor, seemingly because of government worries about their political reliability. Bureaucratics enables an investigator to discover that Ed Forman worked there on a special project authorized by von Kármán, but that Jack Parsons was no longer welcome there.

The Aerojet Corp. compound in Azusa is a cluster of Army surplus-looking buildings at the edge of the desert surrounded by a barbed wire fence—the whole place looks temporary, prefabricated and cheap.

Forman's project area is actually a large Quonset hut the size of a two-car garage built on a concrete pad on the edge of the desert. This was where Forman was assembling the 12-foot long sounding rocket, but Wimpole will have already managed to break in and steal it.

Police and private detectives are on the scene. The fence is being repaired, and other security improvements are being made. Investigators will probably only be able to get inside with special permission from von Kármán or the police. Inspection of the crime scene (**Evidence Collection**) discovers blueprints in the trash.

Physics. The blueprints show a 12-foot long, liquid-fueled sounding rocket (i.e., a sub-orbital non-military rocket, typically used to carry meteorological or other scientific instrumentation) with a negligible payload capacity. The blueprints show that the "payload" actually consists of an airburst-type time-delay fuse and a small explosive core seemingly intended to vaporize the rocket's remaining fuel over the target area. The range of the rocket seems to be a maximum of about 5 miles, depending on the fuel used. Circuitry for remote controlled radio ignition is indicated as well. (1 pt. spend). The investigator's thorough understanding of the blueprints gives him or a her a 2 pt. pool of **Electrical Repair** that can be used to operate or interfere with the operation of the rocket.

The Observatory (Mt. Wilson)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/ Alternate)

The Mt. Wilson Observatory is actually several observatories, built at intervals beginning in the early years of the 20th century. The compound is spread out across a wooded slope, interspersed with spartan living quarters and observatories of various sizes, some obsolete or little visited. There are scientists here making observations, astronomers who seem completely normal. They are upset because the phone lines are out, and aren't likely to be repaired until next week.

The younger astronomers—graduate students from Caltech and elsewhere—are likely to recognize Bob Heinlein at the very least. They will be excited. "*Two in one day!*" one will say. "*How strange!*" They can describe Vance Wimpole making an appearance there some hours before, wandering around and asking some questions. "*I think he went for a hike. Come to think of it, he didn't have a car*." Someone might ask what the investigators think of Wimpole's *Psychohistory*.

The Solar Observatory is a dome-covered coelostat (the name for the system of movable mirrors that direct incoming light into a focal lens) sitting atop a 150-foot tall obelisk of cross-hatched girders. A central cylinder leading from the bottom of the dome to a small building beneath it at ground level is not a support; it is rather an optical tube. The solar telescope was completed in 1912, according to a plaque on one of the girders. The door to the central pillar is a strong steel plate decorated with a peculiar motif—a central disk with the sun's rays stretching out like hands. **Art History** recognizes the design as inspired by ancient Egyptian art; **Theology** notes that the many-handed sun was a motif associated with the god Horus. **History** reminds an investigator that George Ellery Hale, the founder of the observatory, was apparently obsessed with ancient Egypt. **Astronomy** allows an investigator to recall to mind Hale's contention that the Sun was insufficiently understood, given its vital importance to all life on Earth.

The Mount Wilson Toll Road trailhead is here, 6 miles through the mountains from Henninger Flats—about four hours away by foot; use the same rules for this hike as above. **Outdoorsman** or **Geology** may allow an investigator to notice an area of darker greenery through a notch in the slope of Mount Harvard to the southwest, suggesting the presence of a "hanging basin" where run-off water can collect and provide naturally irrigation. A map reveals that area to be Henninger Flats—there is one in a visitor's center mounted to a wall behind glass.

Questioned by the FBI (Central L.A.)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/ Alternate)

Should one of the investigators fall afoul of the FBI, they will take him downtown. You should treat this as a golden opportunity to pass information to the players in the guise of "questioning" the miscreant. Give him a hard time and make him sweat, of course, but generally you should be able to let him out even in the most egregious circumstances within 24

hours at most, sooner with a Law or similar spend. Or the FBI may let him go in the hopes that he will "*lead us to the others.*"

Assess Honesty. The FBI agents don't know what Jack Parsons was up to, and they want to find out. They are willing to cut a deal with someone who can get them the information they need.

Oral History. Based on the questions that the FBI asks, it seems that they suspect that Jack Parsons was selling rocketry secrets to a foreign power. They are asking about some sort of link to the Israelis—but aren't we on their side?—because of Jack's obsession with the biblical Book of Revelation. And they're interested in any connection between Vance Wimpole and Marjorie Cameron.

Should the investigators contact the FBI looking for help, it will generally be stymied or delayed by J. Edgar Hoover's personal supervision of the case; any decision will have to be submitted via cable back to Washington, D.C., for action.

At the Pier

The Santa Monica Pier (Santa Monica)

The entrance to the Santa Monica pier lies beneath an Art Deco sign that reads "*Santa Monica / Yacht Harbor – Sport Fishing / Cafes*." Drivers pass beneath the sign and park along the edge of the pier or in parking lots just past the entrance sign. A big Ferris wheel and a roller coaster anchor the amusement park atop the pier. Boats of all sorts, big and small, lay at anchor off the pier.

Past the roller coaster and the rides is the La Monica Ballroom, which rises like a castle with towers and pennants from the water. Inside, patrons pay 25 cents for a ticket to dance, which lets them out on the huge hardwood dance floor that surrounds the bandstand. The musicians show up at 7 o'clock and play until midnight; tinny canned music is piped in before then starting at around 3 p.m.

The Parking Attendant's Story

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

A parking attendant named Gabe at the lot named on the parking stub from her car's dashboard thinks maybe he remembers Marjorie Cameron if the investigators describe her; he is certain he does if shown a picture. "*Yeah, sure. You don't get too many knockout redheads in California; the sun is just too much for 'em. Sure, she headed straight for the La Monica Ballroom like she had a hot date. She didn't look too happy about it, though. And then she came back crying, and drove out of here like a bat out of hell.*" What time was that? "*Maybe around quarter after five, about then anyway.*"

The Hatcheck Girl's Story

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Asking around, the investigators locate a hatcheck girl named Cynthia who remembers seeing Cameron late Tuesday afternoon. "*The poor thing! She looked so unhappy! And then when I saw who she was waiting for, I figured out why, let me tell you!*" Cynthia describes a fleshy, slab-faced man in his late forties dressed like a cut-rate commodore—"*I can't be sure, but I think his coat had epaulets! I know it had brass buttons!*"—and smoking a detestably smelly cigar. "*He gave me his hat, and it was so garish; the brim had gold braid on it like a Navy officer's dress cap*" (Note that any further inquiry on this point will enable her to remember the words "SS *EXCALIBUR*" around the bottom of Wimpole's hat).

They went out on the dance floor, the hatcheck girl tells the investigators. "*I noticed they both had red hair.*" Cynthia noticed that Marjorie snuck a sip from her hip flask; that seemed to calm her down. The couple seemed to be having an argument as they danced. "*Anyway, the commodore was holding her real close, and I could tell she wasn't enjoying it. He was gripping her tight with one hand and waving his stogie around with the other.*" The hatcheck girl could tell that Marjorie was scared and angry, and it made her mad. She almost screamed, but then the song was over. Marjorie ran from dance floor, and the man she was with—Wimpole—sauntered off himself. "*He didn't care where she went.*"

The Value of a Dollar

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

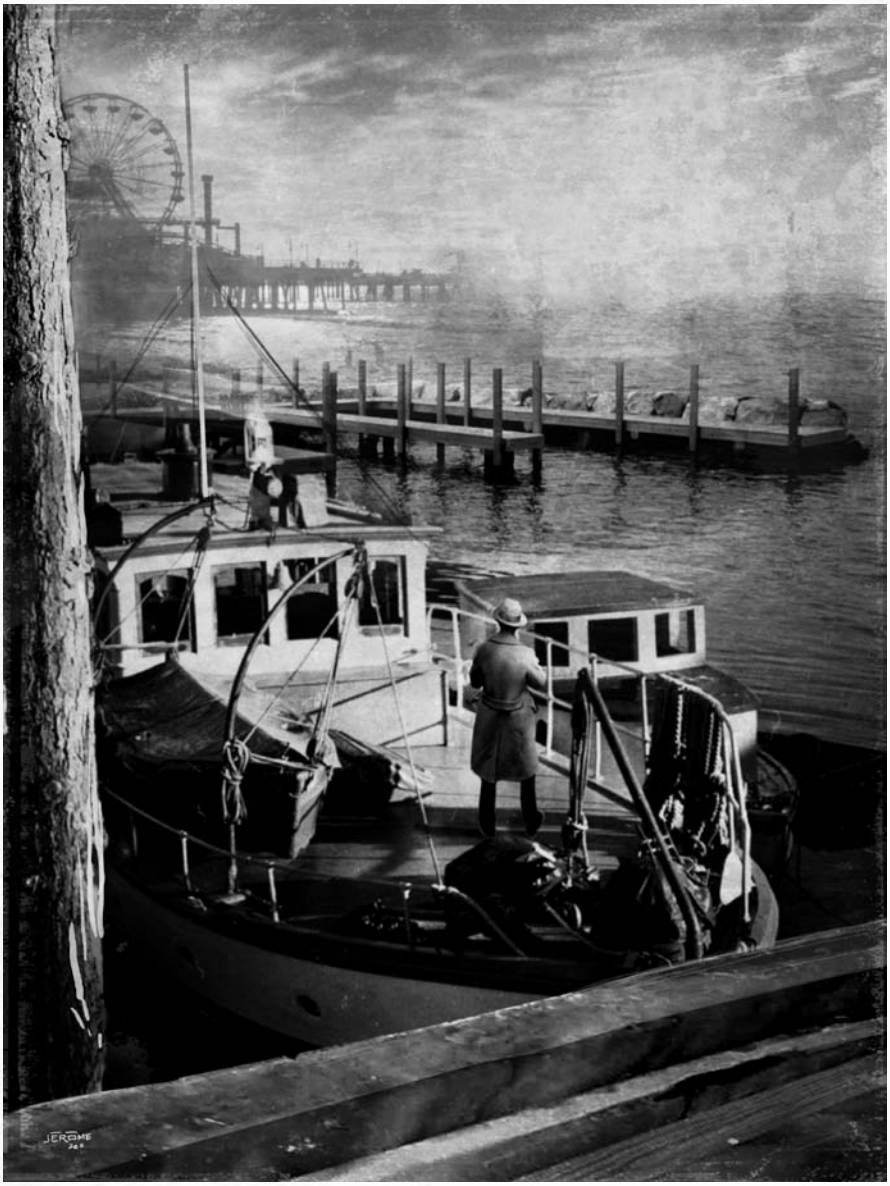
Cynthia gives the story an epilogue. "*And then he decided he was a big spender, and he gave me a whole dollar as a tip when he came to get his hat. But it was a dirty old bill, with writing on it.*" She still has it. Cynthia will not be averse to showing it to them, or even trading it for a clean bill. The dollar bill is marked with a letter-filled grid:

BE	LI	AL
LI	LI	TH
AL	TH	EA

Art History. Lilith is a character from Jewish folklore, Adam's first wife, who left him because he refused to accept her equality. Althea is a character from Greek myth who, in the story, hears a prophecy that her son Meleager will live only until a certain brand is consumed in the family hearth. She hides the brand for many years until she becomes angry at her son for quarreling with and killing her brothers, his uncles. She retrieves the brand and throws it into the fire. Later, she kills herself out of remorse.

Languages. In Hebrew, *Belial* could mean "worthless" or, alternately, "without master." In Greek, althea means "healer."

Occult. Belial is one of the four demon princes subordinate only to Satan listed in medieval grimoire *Ars Goetia*,



translated into English and published in 1904 by Aleister Crowley. Lilith is the name of a Mesopotamian storm demon and bearer of disease, death, and disfigurement.

Theology. Belial is a name from the Jewish and Christian apocrypha, originally used to refer to those who lawlessly rejected God's commands, particularly idolators and inciters to wickedness. Eventually, it began to be used as a synonym for Satan.

The Excalibur

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Finding the Yacht: The Timing. It's possible that the investigators will come here right after the Church of Thelema, on Betty's testimony. Since that will send them haring up to Henninger Flats if they find the painting and interpret it correctly (as they should), you may wish to forestall that. An easy way to do that is simply move the painting to somewhere they haven't been yet, like the Foundation. Another option is to have the *Excalibur* sail away, making a trip down the coast (perhaps to secure some Mexican morning glory seeds somewhere before returning). Inquiring with the harbormaster can reveal the boat's filed excursion papers and expected time of return in about a day, thus freeing up the investigators to do other things while they wait for it to come back. Otherwise, you should allow any reasonable plan to enable them to locate the yacht in the harbor without too much difficulty.

The *Excalibur* is a somewhat beat-up motor yacht about 50 feet in length, now anchored in the Santa Monica Yacht Harbor. It must be reached by launch: a small motor boat or even a row boat will do, and boats of that sort can be hired at the pier. Depending on the timing of their visit and what kind of challenge you wish to provide, there will be four crewmen plus possibly one of the Friendship Org goons aboard. If there are prisoners aboard, the sailors will be alert (**Stealth Difficulty** 5), otherwise they will not be terribly attentive (**Stealth Difficulty** 3).

If investigators try to board the ship openly, a quartet of suspicious psychohistorian sailors will try to restrain them until Wimpole or one of his Friendship Org lieutenants comes to decide what to do with them. If they try to sneak aboard, allow the use of **Piloting** as well as **Stealth** to quietly approach and board the yacht; set the **Difficulties** relatively low depending on the audacity of the investigator's plan.

The Friendship Org man aboard might make a break for it, first grabbing the painting from Catemaco. He'll jump in to a motor launch moored to the aft part of the yacht along with one of the sailors and head for the beach at the base of the pier. He'll run to his car and peel out for Foundation headquarters. Use **Piloting**, **Athletics**, and **Driving** for the chase—do it as a series of paired rolls (two **Piloting**, one

Athletics, and three **Driving**), with the higher of each opposing roll given a +1 cumulative bonus on the next roll. The one who succeeds at the last roll decides how the chase ends—with an escape or with a showdown. If Hollister is aboard guarding Betty or Alexis, he will grab the prisoner he's guarding as well as the painting.

If the investigators gain access to the bridge, **Piloting** enables the investigator to reconstruct the *Excalibur*'s journey by examining its charts and logs. Two weeks ago it was in the Gulf of Mexico at a place called Catemaco south of Veracruz, but then it steamed down to the Panama Canal, passed through, and then cruised back up the Pacific Coast at its top speed.

Any stealthy exploration of the ship will reveal the painting from Catemaco, laid out and weighted down on an antique wooden sea-captain's desk in the commodore's stateroom. **Accounting** or **Language** (Spanish) will allow an investigator to find a receipt amid the clutter in Wimpole's desk from a *tienda del brujo* in Catemaco for *miel de hechiceros* ("sorcerer's honey") and *semillas tlitliltzin* (seeds of the Mexican morning glory plant).

There is a radio on the bridge; it is set to a frequency matching the radio set in Wimpole's jeep. Wimpole may be monitoring the radio; clever investigators may trick him into revealing his whereabouts or other useful information. Similarly, he may use it to taunt the investigators.

The Painting from Catemaco

The background of the painting is a surreal landscape, a mountain meadow in high summer, with the sun high in the sky—but at the edges of the scene the bright blue of day fades to the deep blue-black of night with stars shining; in one corner hangs a pale crescent moon; in the other, a blue-and-green earth. In the center of the meadow a cruel-faced farmer with wild hair struggles with a wheeled plow as he stares into the sky.

Above him a bearded man in magician's robes floats in the air entwined in flowers, his arms upraised and bearing a flaming rocket that points downward at the plowman. The rocket is marked with four equilateral triangles in a row: one pointing up, one pointing down, one up with a line cutting across its upper tip, one down with a line cutting across its lower tip. Below that are the words SATOR ROTAS.

Hovering close by the rocket is a grail-like chalice covered with array of letters arranged in a square on its sides. Floating around the magician's cup are a swarm of symbols and images of obscure meaning.

The Magician's Cup

H	N	H	Ca	H	K	H
N	P	Al	P	Al	F	Be
H	Al	Mn	Ar	Sc	Li	H
Ca	P	Ar	Sc	Mg	F	K
H	Al	Sc	Mg	B	Ca	Ca
K	F	Li	F	Ca	Sc	Ar
H	Be	H	K	Ca	AR	H

These symbols include (**1**) a circle with little horns on top and a cross below entangled in two wavy lines and surrounded by a vine; (**2**) a cup or chalice into which blood drips from the tip of a spear or lance; (**3**) a cluster of little seeds; (**4**) a little pile of ashes marked with the unicursal hexagram; and (**5**) an eagle perched atop a beehive devouring a snake. The form of the land is curved to suggest the body of a woman, with the meadow her belly and the mountains at the left her shoulders, and naked men and women of monstrous aspect, the lower halves of their bodies rooted in the ground, reach beseechingly toward the magician—or perhaps toward the moon. It is signed "M. Cameron."

Examining the Painting

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Art History. The work is clearly allegorical. It is not clear, however, for what the rocket could possibly be an allegory. It looks like the magician is literally wielding the rocket like a magic wand or staff. **The Truth**: The rocket is the instrument for the Despite of Azatao; because of its nature, it serves as every instrument at once—it is sword, chalice, stone, and brand.

Astronomy. The very slender crescent moon is clearly waxing. And those prominent stars in the opposite corner are the constellation Cancer. But why is there a globe, with lines of latitude and longitude, floating in the middle of it? 1 point spend. Maybe it's a reference to the Tropic of Cancer, the line of latitude that marks the apparent position of the sun when the summer solstice occurs.

Biology. The flowers in which the magician is wrapped are a kind of morning glory. They're also called

"moonflowers." **Anthropology**, 1 pt. spend. The seeds of that plant were used by Indians in Mexico for medicinal and shamanistic purposes. I wonder if that's connected to this little cluster of seeds here near the scroll.

Cthulhu Mythos. The plowman represents Azatao, the Horus spirit of Chaos. It is a reference to the Sator square. The ground he plows represents Siabnoghurach, Great Babalon, the Mother of Abominations. **Cthulhu Mythos**, 1 pt. spend. The painting is a set of instructions for a ritual that will enable a magician to command Azatao.

History. The snake devoured by an eagle could be a reference to Mexico; that symbolizes the founding of the city of Tenochtitlan. But on the Mexican coat of arms, the eagle is standing on a cactus, not a beehive. **The Truth**: This is a reference to a special kind of honey made by the sorcerers of Catemaco, in Mexico.

Occult. (**1**) This looks like the alchemical symbol for mercury floating in the air behind the magician, but it's been strangely combined with the zodiac symbol for Aquarius and wreathed with a grapevine. (**2**) Also, those are the alchemical symbols for the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire on the shaft of the rocket.

Chemistry. The mercury symbol could be referring to fulminate of mercury, a dangerous explosive, which is prepared by dissolving mercury in nitric acid (which the alchemists knew as aqua fortis or "strong water") and adding ethanol.

Outdoorsman. The scene looks like it's set somewhere in the San Gabriel Mountains. 1 point spend. As a matter of fact, I think it's the high meadow called Henninger Flats near the Mount Wilson Observatory, north of Pasadena.

Use these clues to help investigators decode the puzzle encoded upon the chalice in the painting.

Chemistry. These are standard abbreviations used to represent elements in chemical formulae. 1 pt. spend. None of the elements in the table have an atomic number higher than 25 (Additionally, provide investigators with a copy of the periodic table of the elements; see handout on page page 20).

Cryptography. The table is a magic word square, since it is vertically and horizontally symmetrical. 1 pt. spend. The table could be encoded using a simple substitution cipher. The trick is to figure out what the symbols in each cell stand for.

The Spirit Moth Key

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

The Truth. Decode the puzzle by replacing each element in the table with its atomic number and then substituting the corresponding letter of the alphabet for each atomic number. This produces the following key:

A	G	A	T	A	S	A
G	O	M	O	M	I	D
A	M	Y	R	U	C	A
T	O	R	U	L	I	S
A	M	U	L	E	T	T
S	I	C	I	T	U	R
A	D	A	S	T	R	A

This key can be used to make space mead and other elixirs, depending on the contents of the Brimful Chalice. With the Adornless Blade, it can be used to summon and bind a byakhee. With the Fiery Brand, it produces a surge of power and confidence in the magician, who may trade points of **Sanity** (permanently) for six-sided dice to roll and add the total to his or her **Stability** pool (temporarily). And with a Carven Stone, it allows contact with a lloigor. Its signature is the swarming of insects.

Anthropology indicates that "amyruca," the word from the third line of the key, is the name of a South American shrub related to the coffee plant called *Psychotria carthagenensis* used in the brewing of *Ayahuasca* (pronounced "EYE uh WAS kuh"), a hallucinogenic tea whose use by Amazon natives in Colombia was recently reported by Harvard botanist Richard Schultes.

Biology allows an investigator to recall that *Agatasa gomomidae* is the species name of a butterfly native to the Indian subcontinent, discovered in the early years of the twentieth century by entomologist William Appleby-Jenkins of Pemberton University. The first two lines of the key could thus be a reference to this creature, which is known in local folklore as a "spirit moth" sacred to the goddess Kali.

Languages (Latin) reveals that the phrase *sic itur ad astra*, which makes up the last two lines of the key, means, "*Thus do we reach the stars*."

Medicine suggests that the fourth line of the key, "torulis," could be a reference to a medical term for any small raised elevation of the skin, like goose bumps.

Occult notes that the fifth line of the key, "amulett," is a Germanic or Middle English spelling of the word *amulet*, and refers to a charm or talisman against evil.

1 H																	2 He
3 Li	4 Be											5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne
11 Na	12 Mg											13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar
19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr
37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe
55 Cs	56 Ba	*	72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn
87 Fr	88 Ra	**															

* Lanthanide series
** Actinide series

PART THREE: THE DESPITE OF AZATAO

This is the climax of the adventure. The investigators must get to Henninger Flats, the place where Vance Wimpole intends to conduct the Despite of Azatao, at noon on the day of the summer solstice—Saturday, June 21, 1952—and stop him somehow. It is up to you as Keeper to manage this final sequence with as much drama and tension as possible. You are hampered to some degree by the fact that investigators will have been trying all along to derail Wimpole's efforts, to forestall or obviate the need for a climactic final encounter in some fashion. Keep things moving forward anyway: Wimpole will try to conduct the ritual even if it is doomed to failure.

Henninger Flats

The Mount Wilson Toll Road trailhead leads from the edge of the city of Pasadena to a well-watered notch high in the mountains that is distinctly greener and shadier than the surrounding slopes. In the morning, at this time of year, low-lying marine fog will blanket the sides of the mountains, reducing visibility until it burns off in the mid-morning. This high basin is called Henninger Flats on the map, and is about three miles from the lower trail head.

Vance Wimpole Arrives!

Wimpole will come barreling into Henninger Flats in the war-surplus jeep he sent DeMille out to purchase. He will come from the opposite direction used by the investigators, with the 12-foot long sounding rocket strapped in the vehicle's center and the jeep loaded down with passengers and supplies.

Vance Wimpole

(b. 1911, age 41). Skills: Athletics 6, Drive 6, Firearms 6, Health 10, Piloting 4, Psychohistory 10, Weapons 6.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +4. Drive: Arrogance (Vance Wimpole wants more!).

To play Vance, smile smugly when things are going your way and glower irritatedly when they are not, particularly when you face opposition, resistance, defiance, or even merely skepticism. Tell arrantly self-aggrandizing stories of your personal exploits, beginning these tales with phrases like, "*When I was in the Navy...,*" "*During my Arctic explorer days...,*" and "*As a young man in the Far East....*"

He will drive to the center of the high meadow and park in the shade of a tree. He will leap out and direct his flunkies to their tasks—setting up a steel-pipe launch rail, arranging the rocket upon it, filling the rocket's fuel tanks with honey and fulminate of mercury and other ingredients. He will direct the binding and guarding of the putative or suspected Moon Child as well as any other prisoners. Give the investigators a chance to hear Wimpole's villainous monologue, if possible—you may wish to punctuate his actions during any fighting with pieces of this monologue in order to obtain his **Psychohistory** bonus.

Wimpole's Villainous Monologue. "*At last, I'll have the last laugh! Parsons, you thought you were so clever! You never realized up to the moment you died how I outfoxed you in every way—I beat you at my game, and today I'll beat you at your own game! I thought it was all mumbo-jumbo when we first met, and I just wanted to bang your pretty little mistress. Faugh! You see how well that turned out! But it was too easy to fool you. Marjorie was a push-over. 'Sure, Vance, I'll show up on his doorstep. Is he cute?' Ha! And then he actually went and married her! She was no Babalon! I invented her! But you—you did something out there in the desert. You connected with something real, something that got inside my skin and can't come out. Well, today—today it comes out! Today I'm the one doing the big hoodoo, and re-making the world in my image. The power will be mine and I'll make this world dance like a monkey on a leash.*"

Ideally for his purposes, Wimpole will (**a**) force Betty to be his familiar to invest him as priest, (**b**) have all of the needed ingredients for the space mead, (**c**) have the sounding rocket at hand, (**d**) know the Spirit Moth Key and the Sator Square, and (**e**) have the Moon Child near at hand to sacrifice at the proper moment.

The identity of the Moon Child is something that you as Keeper should adjust depending on what you and your players will find most satisfying. This write-up expects the answer to be Phil Dick, and his stats are built so that such a revelation will make sense after the fact. If you think your players will find such a move to be dirty pool, you have a number of choices:

You could make it be (**1**) Alexis Wimpole, the two-year-old daughter of Betty and Vance; (**2**) Kwen Smith, the nine-year-old son of Helen and Wilfred; or (**3**) Marjorie Cameron, supposedly the "Scarlet Lady" avatar of the Babalon, Mother of Abominations, but possibly merely someone recruited by Wimpole to bed Parsons while he slept with his friend's mistress. Or you could say it's just unknown. Certainly, Vance Wimpole may be mistaken about the Moon Child, and may be about sacrifice his daughter to no purpose. In general, it's probably fairest for Wimpole not to know who the Moon Child is unless he's met Phil. However, if all else fails, you may have Wimpole kidnap Phil and bring him to Henninger Flats, with the rest of the PCs in hot pursuit, explaining that he identified Phil as the Moon Child from the numerological significance of one of his stories.

Falling short of ideal conditions, Wimpole will improvise. In the absence of Betty, Forrie Ackerman or one of the Friendship Org goons will serve as Priestess, or he will have had Marjorie under wraps all along. Without Jack Parsons' ashes, he'll have his goons break into Wilfred Smith's sanctum and steal the pouch of Aleister Crowley's ashes that Smith keeps there—or he'll slice off his own pinky and burn it.

Shortly before noon, Wimpole begins the ritual in earnest. He will enact a ceremony of magical investment with Betty or whoever he has roped into the job of Priestess. He will use the Spirit Moth key to transform the ingredients in the rocket's fuel tank into space mead. He will use a brick-sized remote control to trigger the rocket fuel's ignition, and the rocket will soar away toward the dome of the Mount Wilson Solar Observatory, during which time Wimpole will chant the Sator square in order to bring Azatao forth. Once Azatao manifests itself, he will use a knife to sacrifice the (suspected) Moon Child, and in so doing expect to become supremely powerful.

While this is going on, give the investigators a chance to take action. But until Wimpole is forced to stop doing what he's doing, let him continue. Do not forget to enact side effects as a result of Wimpole's "failed rolls" during the neo-Enochian rituals—there should be **Stability**-testing insect swarms during the use of the Spirit Moth key and spontaneous combustion during the use of the Sator square.

The Moment of Truth

There are lots of ways that investigators can disrupt the ceremony. Your goal is not to stop the disruption, but to try to make their interference push events toward the catastrophic. Gunfire is especially useful in this regard, especially when there is a 12-foot-long cylinder nearby filled with an extraordinarily volatile substance. Allow a chance for any missed gunshot to ricochet into or otherwise strike the rocket and cause a powerful explosion (doing +6 damage at point-blank, +3 at close, +0 at near, and -2 damage at long range). If the exploding fuel has been transformed into space mead, then test **Stability** at **Difficulty** 5 for a 4-point loss (Mythos shock) as the entheogenic substance sinks into their very pores and those exposed begin to see that this "reality" is merely a thin skin over an indifferently malign nothingness.

Exposing the Moon Child to space mead causes him or her to transform horribly into a monstrous manifestation of **Nyarlathotep**—"Call me Set"—that takes the form a gigantic bestial, long-necked, animal-snouted creature with round horns and red eyes and a body like a cross between a jackal and an alligator. Its scaly mottled red hide glistens in sunlight. The monster will stalk Henninger Flats after those that have offended it: Wimpole comes first. It adds +5 to **Stability** losses it causes (minimum loss of 4) and an additional **Sanity** loss of +4 (minimum loss 3). Eventually, the transformation will wear off and the Moon Child will return to his or her "normal" form.

If the rocket is launched and the Sator square pronounced, then Azatao (Azathoth!) will arrive. It will appear literally as a ball of fire hanging in the air above Mount Wilson. The observatory will be ground zero for the Daemon Sultan's manifestation, and much damage will be caused—equivalent to an artillery barrage (+17 at point-blank, +8 at close, +1 at near, and -2 at long range). Allow investigators to use **Athletics** or **Fleeing** to find cover that protects them, rolling versus **Difficulty** 10 at point-blank range, -2 **Difficulty** per range category further away. Henninger Flats should be at least at the edge of the affected area. Witnessing the manifestation and the results of that manifestation is at least a 10-point **Stability** test at a **Difficulty** of 5 with a minimum loss of 5 even on a successful roll. The **Sanity** loss for witnessing Azatao is +5, with a minimum loss of 3.

If Wimpole survives the arrival of Azatao, he will try to sacrifice the Moon Child. Azatao may forestall his effort by unleashing the Moon Child, or the Outer God may simply depart. This is most likely in the event that the actual Moon Child is not threatened. In the event that Wimpole succeeds in his sacrifice, his plan works—he may employ the power of Azatao to make people spontaneously explode, or control their wills with a word and a gesture. He will use these powers to torment those who opposed him.

Once these events are resolved, the adventure is over. Invite players to offer a brief epilogue for their investigators, and offer a brief coda: soon the 60s would arrive. Who is to say that events like those of *The Big Hoodoo* didn't usher in a new era of license and freedom? And let the curtain fall.

NEO-ENOCHIAN MAGIC

Players may obtain this background information from conversations with knowledgeable occultists like Marjorie Cameron, Jane Wolfe and Wilfred Smith, by reading obscure tomes, or by spending **Occult** or **Library Use.** For the purposes of this adventure, "magick" works, albeit uncertainly and with high potential for undesired side effects, and is intimately connected with the operation of the Mythos.

A Basic Understanding

In neo-Enochian magick, the magician conducts a working by calling to mind a key and employing an instrument of magick to trace and retrace it with sufficient intensity so as to bend an elemental or cosmic force to the magician's will.

Occult. Neo-Enochian "magick" is Aleister Crowley's gloss on the work of 17th century Enochian magicians Dr. John Dee and Edward Kelley, who took their inspiration from the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*, which recounts how fallen angels came to earth and sired monstrous giants. It replaces complex tables with simpler formulae derived from ancient mystery religions.

The Operation of Magick

The magician (or priest) must be properly ordained, acclaimed, or otherwise initiated into his office. If there is a familiar (or priestess), he or she must have bonded with the magician in a physical way. Though some may assume that the magician is always male and the familiar is always female, no such requirement exists. While concentrating on his intention, the magician uses an instrument to trace and retrace a key.

Cryptography. A key is a magic word square; that is, a crossword-like grid in which the same set of words is intertwined horizontally and vertically.

Oral History. During the Babalon Working, Parsons was the magician and Wimpole the familiar.

Instruments of Magick

There are four instruments of magick: the Adornless Blade (a plain knife or rapier-like sword), the Carven Stone (a stone tablet indited with an appropriate cipher), the Fiery Brand (a candle, torch, or burning branch), and the Brimful Chalice (a goblet or bowl, usually filled with wine). Each corresponds to a different type of "elemental" effect, respectively air, earth, fire, or water, construed fairly broadly (see table on page 43). The precise effect produced by the key depends on the instrument used in the ceremony as well as other magical foci that may be present to shape the magical effect. The key itself connects to a particular cosmic entity, force, or soul; its nature will tend to color the effects as well. This "coloration" is referred to as the signature of the key.

In game terms, any reasonable instance of an instrument allows the magic to proceed. You may decide that some objects bear so tenuous a resemblance to their ideal as to increase the Difficulty of the magician's die roll. The creation or selection of a "proper" instrument can either be played out or abstracted via a Craft or Bargaining spend, for example. Sometimes, a particularly suitable instrument will reduce the Difficulty of the magician's roll, or increase the Difficulty of the GM's rolls to oppose the magician.

Magickal Keys

L	A	W
A	W	A
W	A	R

Though larger keys are more difficult to employ, they are also more potent in their effects—and side effects. As a very rough and general rule of thumb, use the size of the key as the average size of the **Stability** test its (intended) effects will prompt. Creating a key generally requires a 1 or 2 point **Cryptography** spend, unless the magician learns one from another source.

A simple example is the Lawful Key set down in Crowley's Book of Magick (see **Thelemite Tomes** on page page 15). Crowley also refers to it as "*the Call to Those Who Serve the Daemon Sultan*." Its signature is a weird, unearthly fluting or piping that seems to emanate from an unknown source. The key consists of three intertwined three-letter words: LAW AWA WAR. Anthropology reminds an investigator that "awa" is the name of an intoxicating Polynesian beverage with hallucinogenic and even entheogenic effects. **Occult**, **Cryptography,** or perhaps even **Theology** will enable the investigator to posit that the key implies something about transforming love into hate (because "*Love is the law, love under will,*" according to Crowley) or order into chaos, and that it will thus produce effects consonant with that motif. Alternately, Wilmer Smith can explain

It is up to you as Keeper to determine the specific effects of a given magical working. You should take into account the nature of the instrument, the signature (and deeper meanings of which you are aware) of the key, and the intent of the magician.

Neo-Enochian Space Mead

To create space mead, the Brimful Chalice is filled with the blooded wine from the Thelemite ritual and special honey from Catemaco mixed with crushed Mexican morning glory seeds, the ashes of a magician, and (very dangerous) fulminate of mercury. The magician uses a special magic word

Instrument	Element	Magical Effects	Side Effects
Adornless Blade	air	windstorms; enhanced perceptual abilities	hallucinations; whirring silver flying saucers
Carven Stone	earth	tremors; great luck, fortune, or material success	physical weakness; bug-eyed monsters (BEMs)
Fiery Brand	fire	heat, flames; raw emotions	madness; glowing spherical or cigar-shaped UFOs.
Brimful Chalice	water	rain, snow; prophetic visions; dreams	nightmares; alien abductions; little green men (LGM)

square called the Spirit Moth Key (see **The Painting from Catemaco** on page page 113) as the ritual key, and the mixture is transformed to space mead if the ritual succeeds. On a failure, the whole thing explodes, doing +12 damage at point-blank range. This is what happened to Parsons, thanks to Wimpole's curse.

Neo-Enochian Game Mechanics

In game terms, an act of neo-Enochian magick requires a special contest between the magician's **Stability** at a **Difficulty** equal to the number of lines in the key, on the one hand, and the "Inertia" of the cipher or key, also determined by how many lines it has: A three-line key rolls versus **Difficulty** 6; a four-line key versus **Difficulty** 5; five-line key, **Difficulty** 4; six-line key, **Difficulty** 3; and a seven-line key versus **Difficulty** 2. The magician may spend his own **Stability** to affect the roll; additionally, the magician's familiar may spend **Stability** to affect the roll as well.

In this special contest, the magician and the GM both roll three times, trying to succeed each time—any one failure makes the whole sequence a failure. Each spend, however, only counts toward a single roll. The magician's rolls represent his attempt to keep the spirit contained, having once called it forth. If the magician fails any one of his rolls, he loses control of the working, and may see unexpected side effects. The **Inertia** rolls represent the spirit's attempt to resist the magician's will. If the GM fails any one of her rolls, the spirit bends to the will of the magician, and magical effects consonant with the intent of the magician will occur.

If both fail, something unexpected happens—that is, some combination of magical and side effects (i.e., the magician has forced the spirit to bend to his will, but that will has been corrupted, undermined or altered by the efforts of the spirit). If neither fails, nothing happens (i.e., the spirit is resisting, but the magician has it contained). In that case, the magician may opt to either (**1**) cease the effort without consequence, banishing the spirit and breaking the magickal link or (**2**) continue it, thus initiating another set of rolls. Once the magician fails three sets of rolls, though, he is exhausted and can no longer continue without rest. The supportive presence of the magician's familiar allows another three sets of failed rolls before exhaustion sets in.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:

Investigator Name: Phil Dick

Drive: Duty

Occupation:[2] Record Store Clerk

Special: Gnostic Visions – see below

Pillars of Sanity: 1) My twin sister Jane who died as an infant is a lost part of me. 2) Causaility is an illusion. 3) *I am not crazy!*

Sanity[1]			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15
Hit Threshold[3]			

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Academic Abilities	Interpersonal Abilities	General Abilities
Accounting - 2	Bargain - 2	Althletics - 6
Anthropology - 1	Credit Rating - 3	Conceal - 2
Cthulhu Mythos[4]	Oral History -1	Driving - 4
Geology - 1	Streetwise - 2	Electrical Repair[(1)] - 2
Library Use - 2	Technical Abilities	First Aid - 2
Occult - 2		Fleeing[7] - 12
Theology - 2	Art (sci-fi writing) - 2	Health[9] - 11
	Chemistry - 1	Sanity[9] - 8
	Evidence Collection - 1	Stability[9] - 8
Special	Pharmacy - 2	Scuffling - 6
With the right phsychoactive stimulation, Phil can trade points of Sanity for intuitive insights that feel like communications from a benevolent higher being. In game terms, obscure but relevant clues delivered in the form of dream-like, symbol laden visions; the GM may accompany these 'bonus clues' with Stability tests based on what Phil sees.		Sense Trouble - 6
		Stealth - 4

[1] In a Pulp game where Sanity can be recovered, mark Sanity pool loss with a line, Sanity rating loss with a cross.

[2] Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

[3] Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

[(1)] These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

[4] Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

[5] In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

[6] Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

[7] Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

[8] Only Alienists and Parapsycholigists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

[9] You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

Phil Dick's Connection to Tony Boucher: You attended Tony's weekly writing class at his home in Berkeley (or would send Kleo in your stead); Tony was indifferent to your "literary" stories, but liked your short fantasy. Last year, in October, you made your first professional sale to Tony when he bought "Roog" for The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction. That was your big break. Now you're starting to sell potboiler short stories to other SF magazines as well and hoping to be able to make a living at it soon, and you've just landed an agent.

Phil Dick's Connection to Bob Heinlein: You just met Heinlein for the first time yesterday, at Tony Boucher's. You have not made up your mind up about him yet; he seems like a square.

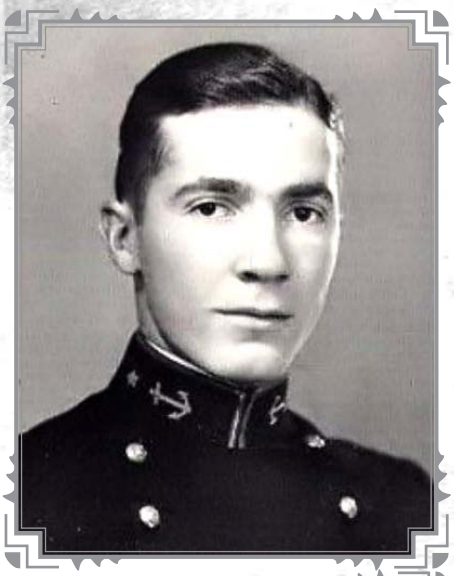
Phil Dick's Connection to Ginny Heinlein: You believe that women are stronger than men, and the talented Mrs. Heinlein is no exception. You might even have a little crush on her.

Phil Dick's Connection to Jack Parsons: You've never met the man, but the FBI is interested in what he'd been up to before he died. They know that Tony Boucher and his friends the Heinleins plan to attend Parsons' funeral service. They want you to go with them down to Los Angeles, pump all of Parsons' old friends about his activities, and report back to them. If you do, they've promised—although not in so many words—not to proceed with their investigation of your wife Kleo for her "un-American activities" like pamphleteering and going to meetings at Berkeley. They've given you the name and phone number of an agent in Los Angeles; you're supposed to contact him with the information.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



Investigator Name: Robert A. Heinlein

Drive: Artistic Sensitivity

Occupation:[2] Author

Special: Science Fiction Writer – see below

Pillars of Sanity: 1) The exceptional place of the USA in world history. 2) the manifest destiny of the human race to conquer the solar system and then the stars.

Sanity[1]			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15
Hit Threshold[3]			

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Academic Abilities	Interpersonal Abilities	General Abilities
Art History - 2	Assess Honesty -1	Althletics - 6
Cthulhu Mythos[4]	Bureaucracy - 1	Driving - 2
Cryptography - 1	Credit Rating - 5	Electrical Repair[(1)] - 2
Geology - 1		Explosives - 4
History - 1	Technical Abilities	Firearms - 8
Library Use - 2		Fleeing[7] - 6
Physics - 1	Art (Sci-fi writer) - 2	Health[9] - 8
	Astronomy - 1	Mechanical Repair - 2
	Evidence Collection - 1	Piloting - 6
	Outdoorsman - 1	Sanity[9] - 6
Special	Photography - 1	Stability[9] - 8
May engage in science-fictional speculation, allowing him to make plausible guesses about the sociological and technological causes of a mysterious phenomenon. He may spend 2 pts of Art once per session when such explanations are warranted; this gives him and investigators with him a boost in confidence (replenish 1d6 Stability each). The player must of course offer at least a brief summary of Bob's what-if supposition to justify the spend.		Scuffling - 6
		Sense Trouble - 4
		Stealth - 2
		Shadowing - 4
		Weapons (fencing) - 6

[1] In a Pulp game where Sanity can be recovered, mark Sanity pool loss with a line, Sanity rating loss with a cross.

[2] Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

[3] Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

[(1)] These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

[4] Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

[5] In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

[6] Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

[7] Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

[8] Only Alienists and Parapsycholigists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

[9] You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

Bob Heinlein's Connection to Tony Boucher: You met Tony in the late 1930s when he would come to the little gatherings you'd host at your old house in Laurel Canyon for your fellow toilers in the vale of science fiction. Leslyn named it the Mañana Literary Society, since that's when you were all going to write the great stories you'd talk about—tomorrow! The joke was funny, then; this was before Leslyn's drinking got out of hand and she turned mean. You enjoyed reading the portrait of those days that Boucher built into that detective piece he wrote during the war; the character based on you was the smartest guy in the book. You were glad when your plans for your round-the-world trip with Ginny included a visit with Tony in San Francisco; you didn't get to see him much the last time you were in California, when you were working on the script for George Pal's movie Destination Moon almost two years ago.

Bob Heinlein's Connection to Phil Dick: This Phil Dick kid reminds you of yourself when you were just starting out. He's hungry, he's dedicated to his craft, and he's not afraid to call it like he sees it.

Bob Heinlein's Connection to Ginny Heinlein: You took to Ginny when you were in Philadelphia working for the Navy as a civilian scientist during World War II and she was an officer in the WAVES, the sort of girl who would take off her Navy blues and put on dungarees to get some real work done. After the war, when Ginny came to California to go to grad school at UCLA, she was a regular visitor at your house. Her vivacious good cheer and clear-eyed approach to life was a breath of fresh air compared to Leslyn's moody volatility, her neurasthenic ennui, and her incessant drinking—the war sucked Leslyn dry, and you needed to get free from her or you'd have been sucked dry too. Ginny helped you deal with your emotional bleakness following the divorce. You have never loved anyone the way you love Ginny; she is your complement in every respect, shoring up your weaknesses and underscoring your strengths.

Bob Heinlein's Connection to Jack Parsons: As you recall, Forrie Ackerman suggested that you and your fellow writers at the Mañana Literary Society might want to hear Jack talk. Parsons was still just a kid, really, but his talk was a tour de force. The last time you were in California, though, things had changed. It was two years ago. You were working on Destination Moon, and he came to see you; he needed work and he was hoping that you could get him a job as a technical consultant on the production. Certainly he would have been a good choice for the job, should something have happened to you. But the producer told you there was no way; Parsons was on a list somewhere as a potential subversive, and the studio wouldn't okay hiring a Red. You told him you were sorry over the phone, but he just laughed in a scary way and told you that he was working on a "special project" that would change everything for him. You never heard from him after that.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:

Investigator Name: Virginia 'Ginny' Heinlein

Drive: Adventure

Occupation:[2] Engineer

Special: Engineering Acumen

Pillars of Sanity: 1) most problems can be solved with a little bit of judiciously applied engineering know-how. 2) men are men and women are women.

Sanity[1]			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15
Hit Threshold[3]			

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Academic Abilities	Interpersonal Abilities	General Abilities
Biology - 1	Bargain - 1	Athletics - 8
Cthulhu Mythos[4]	Credit Rating - 4	Driving - 4
Languages[6] - 4	Flattery - 2	Electrical Repair[(1)] - 4
- French	Reassurance - 2	Explosives - 2
- Latin	Technical Abilities	Firearms[5] - 4
Library Use - 2		Fleeing[7] - 8
Physics - 2	Chemistry - 2	Health[9] - 8
	Evidence Collection - 2	Mechanical Repair - 2
	Locksmith - 1	Preparedness - 4
	Outdoorsman - 1	Sanity[9] - 5
	Photography - 2	Stability[9] - 10
Special		Scuffling - 4
The Difficulty of Mechanical Repair or Electrical Repair tasks that Ginny undertakes is reduced by one.		Sense Trouble - 4
		Stealth - 4

[1] In a Pulp game where Sanity can be recovered, mark Sanity pool loss with a line, Sanity rating loss with a cross.

[2] Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

[3] Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

[(1)] These General abiltities double up as Investigative abilities

[4] Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

[5] In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

[6] Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

[7] Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

[8] Only Alienists and Parapsycholigists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

[9] You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Tony Boucher: You met Tony socially once or twice when you and Bob were living in California after the war. You suspect that, because you are Bob's second wife, Tony (who despite his cultivated air of dissipated urbanity is really quite the devout Catholic) regards you as somehow less "legitimate" than that old shrew Leslyn, even though she made Bob miserable and you make him happy. But Bob loves Tony; he was particularly tickled by the way that he portrayed a disguised version of him in a mystery novel some years ago.

Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Phil Dick: Phil seems like just a boy to you; all of the young men of his generation do, even though you suppose you're not really that much older than they are. Still, you served during the war and they were just too young.

Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Bob Heinlein: You met Bob at the Philadelphia Naval Yard during World War II, when you both worked as scientists for the government. You admired his intellect and his integrity, and you appreciated his sparkling wit and gallant manner. Bob took you seriously as an engineer and a scientist, unlike many of the men at the Yard, even when you technically outranked them as a WAVE lieutenant. Bob encouraged you to apply to grad school, and helped you find your feet in Los Angeles right after the war. But all the time you knew your friendship was destined to be more than platonic, and when Bob's divorce from Leslyn came through, you had no compunction about dropping grad school and becoming Mrs. Robert A. Heinlein. Now you are Bob's partner in everything he does. So far it's worked out pretty well; you've been able to build your dream-house in Colorado Springs and now you're about to embark on the first leg of a round-the-world tour. Pretty good for little Ginny Gerstenfeld from Brooklyn!

Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Jack Parsons: Although you never actually met him, you have read some of Parsons' technical work. He wrote a brilliant little summary of the chemical properties of various explosives during the war. You were surprised to learn from Bob that he'd come to looking for work on the movie set where Bob was the writer just after you'd gotten married. You thought Parsons and his partners had managed to parlay his wartime Army contract building rocket-powered takeoff-assist boosters for heavy planes on short runways into funding for a rocket motor company called Aerojet or something like that, but apparently Parsons had gotten out of the rocket-motor business and was piecing together jobs here and there as an explosives expert doing special effects for the movies.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:

Investigator Name: Tony Boucher

Drive: Thirst for Knowledge

Occupation:[2] Editor/Reviewer

Special: Mystery Buff – see below

Pillars of Sanity: 1) Roman Catholic Faith, 2) The power of the intellect to find solutions and solve problems

Sanity[1]			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15
Hit Threshold[3]			

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Academic Abilities	Interpersonal Abilities	General Abilities
Architecture - 1	Assess Honesty -2	Conceal - 4
Art History - 4	Bargain - 2	Disguise [(1)] - 4
Cthulhu Mythos[4]	Credit Rating - 4	Filch - 4
History - 2	Oral History -1	Firearms[5] - 4
Languages[6] - 4	**Technical Abilities**	First Aid - 4
		Fleeing[7] - 8
	Art (mystery writing) - 1	Health[9] - 6
	Craft (cooking) - 1	Preparedness - 8
		Psychoanalysis - 4
Law - 2	**Special**	Sanity[9] - 6
Library Use - 2	Can spend Art History as Forensics (to examine clues that resemble mysteries he's read or written) or Cop Talk (to interact with police and legal professionals).	Stability[9] - 12
Occult - 1		Sense Trouble - 6
Theology - 1		Shadowing - 4

[1] In a Pulp game where Sanity can be recovered, mark Sanity pool loss with a line, Sanity rating loss with a cross.

[2] Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

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[(1)] These General abiltities double up as Investigative abilities

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[7] Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

[8] Only Alienists and Parapsycholigists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

[9] You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

Tony Boucher's Connection to Bob Heinlein: You became friends with Bob after visiting the weekly writer's salon he hosted at his house in the Hollywood Hills before the war; he called it the Mañana Literary Society after some obscure joke his then-wife Leslyn made. You portrayed the pre-war California sci-fi scene in a locked-room mystery you wrote ten years ago, Rocket to the Morgue. Over the years you have stayed friends, but you haven't really had a chance to see much of Bob, between his work in Philly during the war and his move to Colorado afterward. It's ironic that the death of your mutual friend Jack Parsons should mark the occasion of the Heinleins' visit to California.

Tony Boucher's Connection to Ginny Heinlein: You met Ginny briefly when Bob returned to California for a writing job a few years ago. Compared to Leslyn, Ginny is a straight arrow. She's a good-natured tomboy where Leslyn was an acerbic artiste. Honestly, you think Ginny's better for Bob than Leslyn was, even though your faith frowns on divorce.

Tony Boucher's Connection to Phil Dick: You met Phil at a writing workshop you taught at Berkeley a few years ago. You encouraged him to send a story to The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, since you were looking to cultivate new talent in the pages of your magazine. You think Phil is going to make a name for himself in this field; he's a real talent. When he asked to come with you to the ceremony for Parsons, you agreed readily—you'll be interested in his take on the characters you'll meet.

Tony Boucher's Connection to Jack Parsons: Jack showed up a few times at Bob Heinlein's old house to drink his liquor and ogle his wife during the late-night bull sessions Bob loved to hold there. You once went to a party at Jack's house, and you were startled to discover that rocket scientist Jack Parsons seemed to have this alternate life where he took the far-out things that he told the sci-fi writers seriously: studying magic and doing drugs and looking for ways to peer into alternate realities. You hadn't heard much about him lately until you saw the paper announcing his death. Now your mind is working hard; you can see how a murder mystery might be written based loosely on the details of Jack's accident. A little more research is definitely in order.

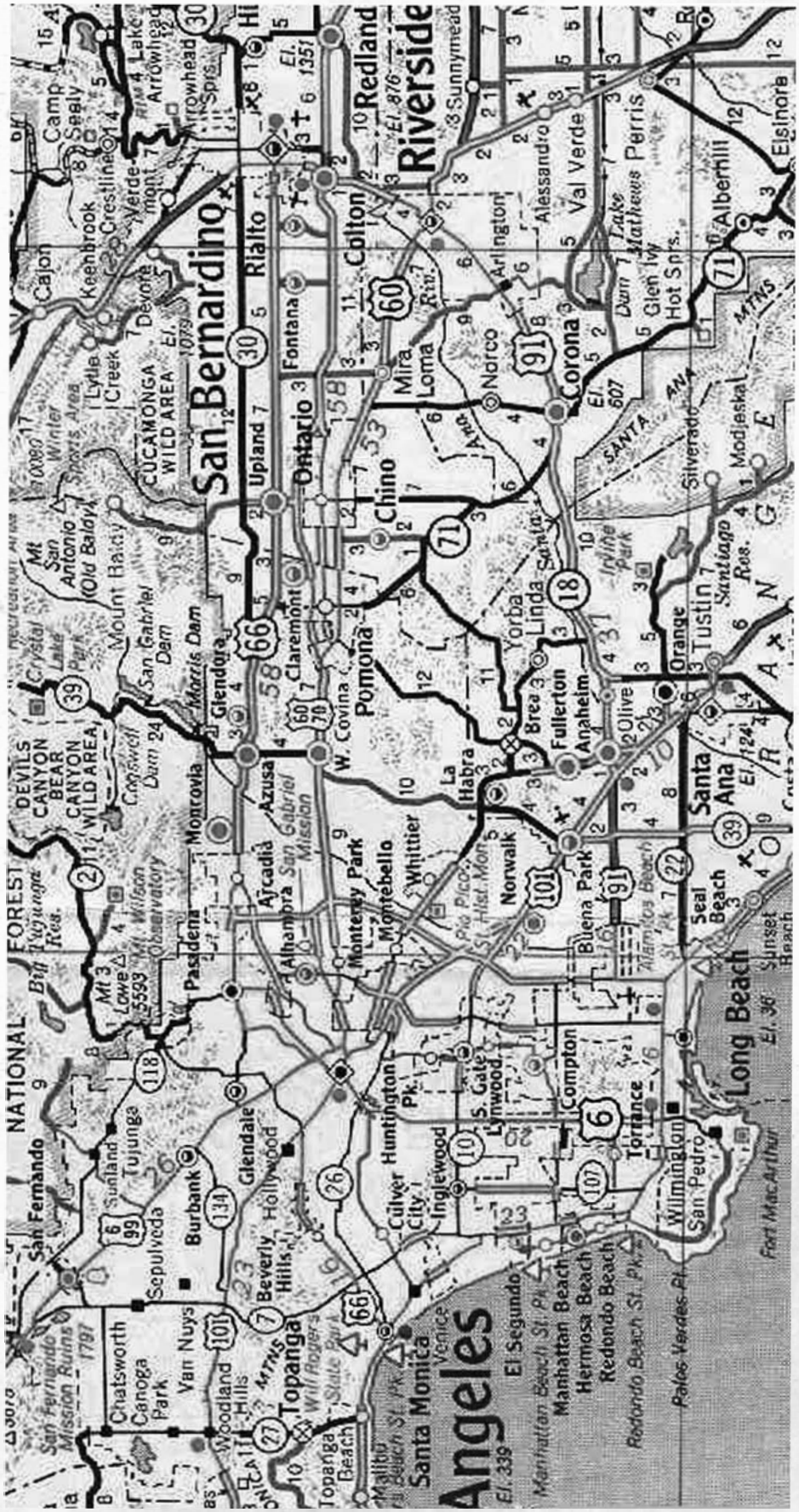
The Los Angeles Times

Wednesday, June 18, 1952

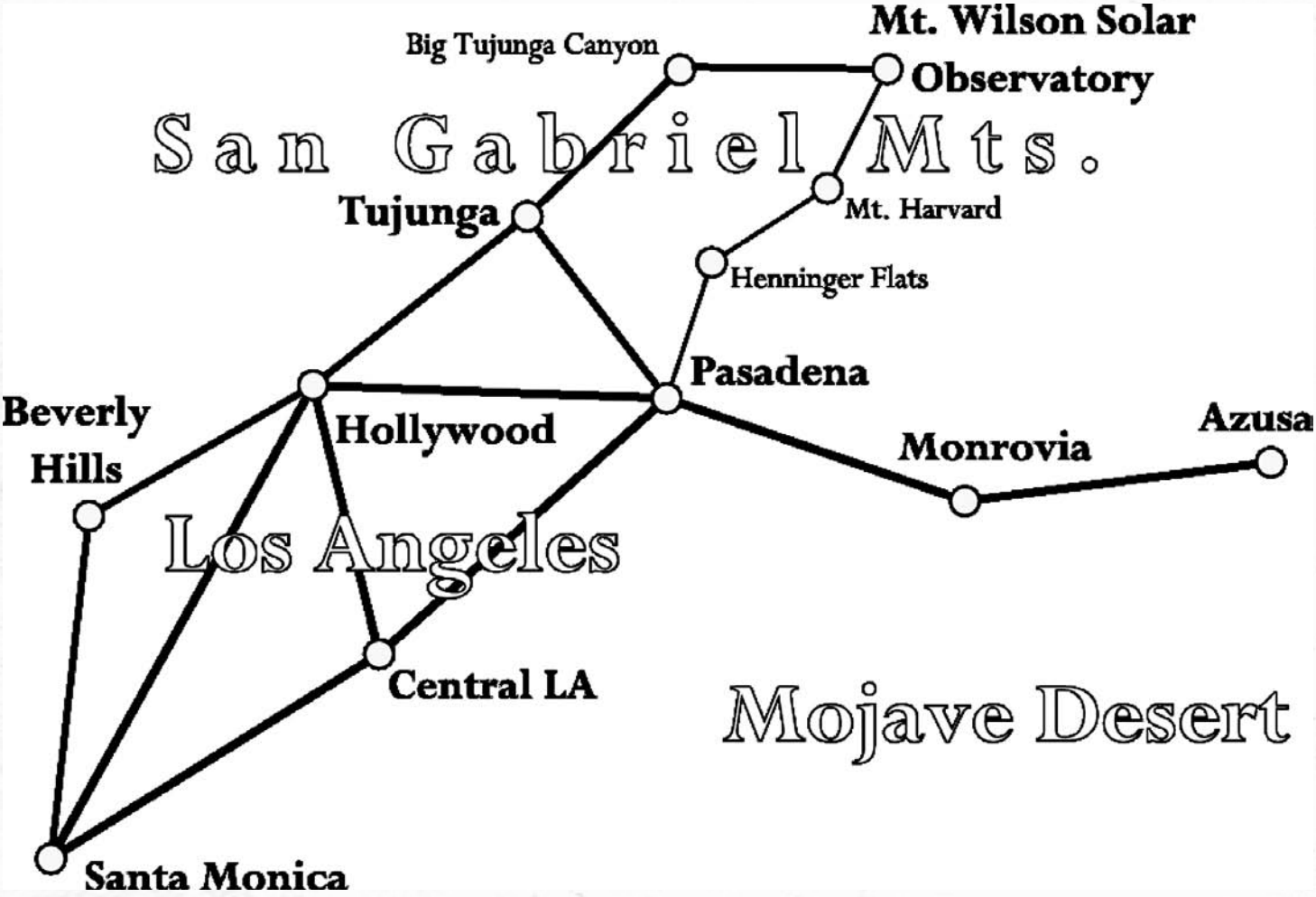
Rocket Scientist Killed in Pasadena Explosion

A brilliant Pasadena rocket propulsion expert met death in an explosion that ripped apart his garage laboratory yesterday and as a tragic aftermath his mother committed suicide by taking sleeping pills. John W. Parsons, 31, former Caltech scientist and instructor and one of the founders of the schools famed Arroyo Seco Jet Propulsion Laboratory, was killed when two explosions, which occured almost simultaneously, demolished the laboratory on the grounds of the former Busch estate at 1071 S. Orange Grove Ave., Pasadena. Parsons mother, Mrs. Ruth Virginia Parsons, 58, of 21 W. Glenarm St., Pasadena, took 45 pills after she was notified of her sons death at the Huntington Memorial Hospital about an hour after the explosion. Parsons was recognized as one of the foremost authorities on rocket propulsion since leaving Caltech in 1946. He had been employed as a consultant by many firms, his brother-in-law Robert Cameron, 28, of 125 N. Rampart Blvd., told newsmen. Parsons and Dr. Theodore Von Karmne had founded the Caltech jet laboratory in the Arroyo Seco. The explosives expert was preparing for a trip to Mexco on a job assignment, the nature of which was very secretive, Cameron said. Parsons was last employed by the Burnute Powder Co. in Tujunga. Parsons was apparently packing bottled explosives in a box to take with him on the trip today when the explosion occured. It was followed immediately by a second and larger explosion, setting off other explosives stored in the room, according to Pasadena Police Lt. John C. Elliot. Four tenants residing in the building above the garage laboratory were unnjured but were routed from their apartments. Salvaton Ganci, an artist who occupies the unit directly above the laboratory, said the blast ripped a large hole in the floor and broke a leg of his grand piano. The bodies of Parsons and his mother were taken to the Turner-Stevens Mortuary in Monrovia where a wake will be held tomorrow at 3 pm.

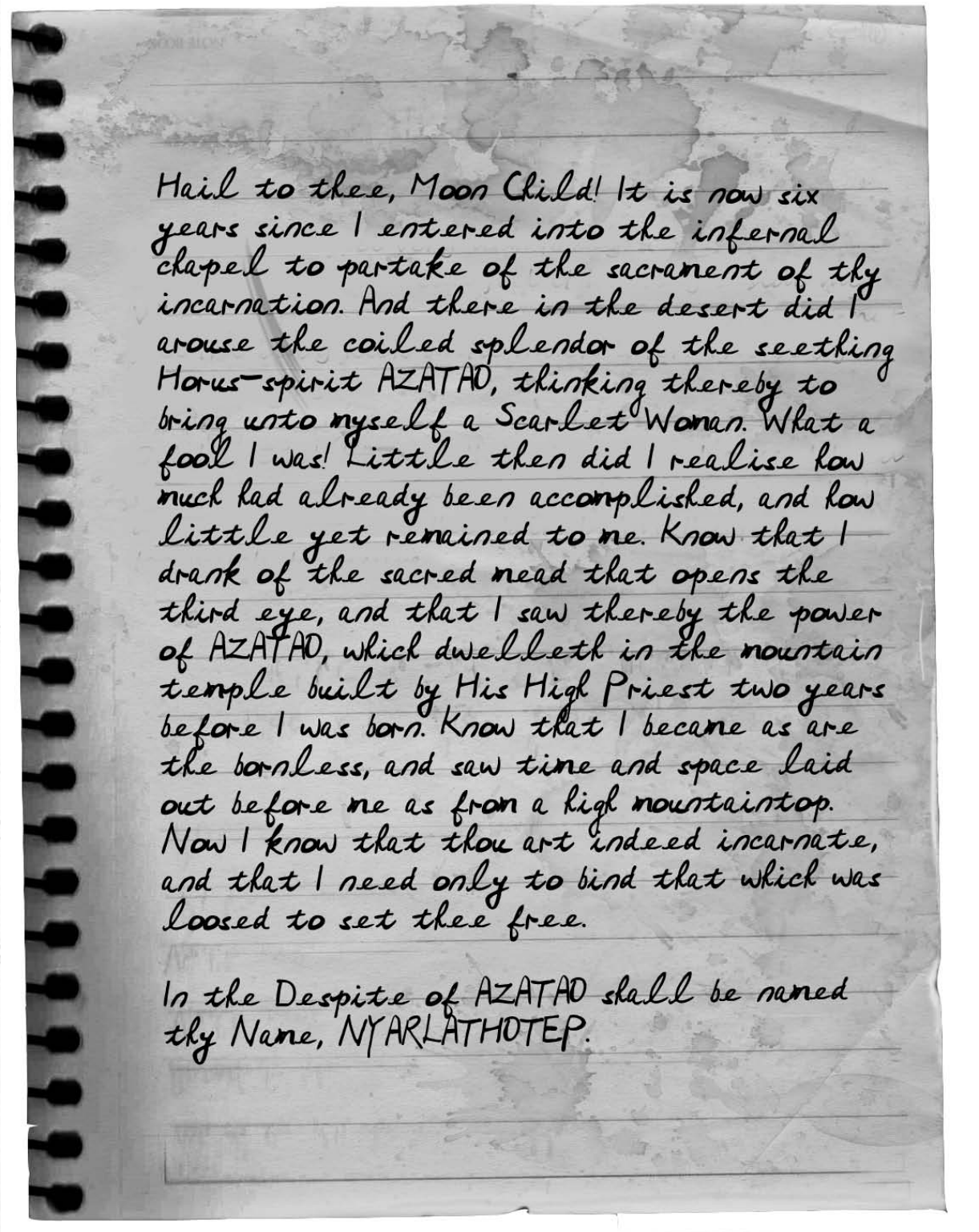
Handout #1 - Newspaper article



Handout #2
Part of the Greater Los Angeles
area - circa mid 1950s



GM Aid #1
Rules for Movement Map



Hail to thee, Moon Child! It is now six years since I entered into the infernal chapel to partake of the sacrament of thy incarnation. And there in the desert did I arouse the coiled splendor of the seething Horus-spirit AZATAO, thinking thereby to bring unto myself a Scarlet Woman. What a fool I was! Little then did I realise how much had already been accomplished, and how little yet remained to me. Know that I drank of the sacred mead that opens the third eye, and that I saw thereby the power of AZATAO, which dwelleth in the mountain temple built by His High Priest two years before I was born. Know that I became as are the bornless, and saw time and space laid out before me as from a high mountaintop. Now I know that thou art indeed incarnate, and that I need only to bind that which was loosed to set thee free.

In the Despite of AZATAO shall be named thy Name, NYARLATHOTEP.

Handout #3
A Scrap of Paper

The Painting from Catemaco

The background of the painting is a surreal landscape, a mountain meadow in high summer, with the sun high in the sky—but at the edges of the scene the bright blue of day fades to the deep blue-black of night with stars shining; in one corner hangs a pale crescent moon; in the other, a blue-and-green earth. In the center of the meadow a cruel-faced farmer with wild hair struggles with a wheeled plow as he stares into the sky.

Above him a bearded man in magician's robes floats in the air entwined in flowers, his arms upraised and bearing a flaming rocket that points downward at the plowman. The rocket is marked with four equilateral triangles in a row: one pointing up, one pointing down, one up with a line cutting across its upper tip, one down with a line cutting across its lower tip. Below that are the words SATOR ROTAS.

Hovering close by the rocket is a grail-like chalice covered with array of letters arranged in a square on its sides. Floating around the magician's cup are a swarm of symbols and images of obscure meaning.

The Magician's Cup

H	N	H	Ca	H	K	H
N	P	Al	P	Al	F	Be
H	Al	Mn	Ar	Sc	Li	H
Ca	P	Ar	Sc	Mg	F	K
H	Al	Sc	Mg	B	Ca	Ca
K	F	Li	F	Ca	Sc	Ar
H	Be	H	K	Ca	AR	H

These symbols include (**1**) a circle with little horns on top and a cross below entangled in two wavy lines and surrounded by a vine; (**2**) a cup or chalice into which blood drips from the tip of a spear or lance; (**3**) a cluster of little seeds; (**4**) a little pile of ashes marked with the unicursal hexagram; and (**5**) an eagle perched atop a beehive devouring a snake. The form of the land is curved to suggest the body of a woman, with the meadow her belly and the mountains at the left her shoulders, and naked men and women of monstrous aspect, the lower halves of their bodies rooted in the ground, reach beseechingly toward the magician—or perhaps toward the moon. It is signed "M. Cameron."

Handout #4
Description of the Catamaco Painting

1 H																	2 He
3 Li	4 Be											5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne
11 Na	12 Mg											13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar
19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr
37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe
55 Cs	56 Ba	*	72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn
87 Fr	88 Ra	**															

* Lanthanide series

** Actinide series

Handout #5

Periodic Table of the Elements

Castle Bravo

Credits

Publisher: Simon Rogers

Author: Bill White from an idea by Judd Karlman

Layout: Jérôme Huguenin

Art Direction: Jérôme Huguenin & Bill White

Art: Jérôme Huguenin

Photo : United States Deparment of Defense

Playtesters: ***Thanks to Playtesters:*** Danni Bayn, Phillipa Borland, Dave Byrne, Joanna Corcoran, Edward Chiassan, Mark DiPasquale, Malcolm Edwards, Vincent Fisher, Kevin Fitzpatrick, Sam Friedman, Frank Hablawi, Kev Hickman, Matthew Higgins, Elizabeth Hill, Danny Hua, Aaron Jackson, Mick "Flossy" Jones, Belinda Kelly, Angela Kemp, Ben Kemp, Dave Lodge, Chris Malone, David Petroski, Joel Rojas, Jim Schmitz, Guy Sodin, OpalLisa Thrush, Dave Wiegal, and Sam Zeitlin as well as the group from Ubercon IX

Castle Bravo

INTRODUCTION

The year is 1954. The Korean War recently ended in a hard-fought stalemate. With the Cold War in full swing, the United States is busily conducting secret tests to determine the explosive yield of different models of nuclear weapons Some of these tests are being conducted in the Marshall Islands at Bikini atoll, where nearly eight years before, in the aftermath of World War II, a similar but highly public test called Operation Crossroads caused international controversy as a display of American military might and intentions.

This adventure draws heavily upon Lovecraft's stories "The Shadow Out of Time" and "The Dunwich Horror," but it "re-reads" them so that the details are homage rather than slavish imitation. In tone, the game should play out much closer to Purist than to Pulp, although you can expect a fair dose of desperate military-flavored action to break out by the end of the adventure. One way to think of this scenario is as an attempt to do 1950s atomic horror without descending into camp or kitsch. If Lovecraft had lived, and seen the stark horrors of World War II give way to the subtler terrors of McCarthyism and Mutually Assured Destruction, what sorts of tales would he have told?

As Keeper, you should read through the entire adventure first and make note of the instructions provided for staging the adventure, changing those details to suit your play preferences and those of your players. As the group progresses through the adventure, it is likely to proceed in unanticipated directions, but you need only extrapolate from the information presented here to judge the likely consequences of their actions.

Some basic familiarity with military protocol is presumed, but a brief summary of military etiquette is provided at the end of the adventure for those who desire it. Otherwise, you may fudge or finesse those details insofar as your own knowledge requires.

The Hook

The investigators are sailors and scientists deployed aboard the Navy escort carrier USS *Bairoko* to the South Pacific as part of "Joint Task Force Seven" to participate in a series of secret thermonuclear test shots in the Bikini atoll called Operation Castle. After the first detonation, strange events begin to occur, and the investigators must figure out what is going on if they wish to save the ship and themselves.

The Horrible Truth

Far in the future, an advanced race of spider-like creatures calling themselves Yithians tried to bind the cosmic entity Yog-Sothoth to their will. Their plan failed and their world—a far future Earth that they called "Yith"—was destroyed. They attempted to escape as disembodied consciousnesses into the far, far distant past, but were caught by Yog-Sothoth, who imprisoned them in the cone-shaped bodies of a species commensal with the polypous flying space-faring semi-material servitors Yog-Sothoth had extruded into our dimension long, long ago.

Trapped in the past but possessed of powerful mental gifts, the Yithians subdued the flying polyps and imprisoned them in their own basalt towers. Rebuilding their civilization and gaining control of the ability to travel through time by temporarily taking control of the bodies of cross-temporal "natives," the Yithians began gathering the knowledge they needed to complete their mastery of the space-time continuum and escape the cone-shaped bodies in which they'd been imprisoned.

However, their interference with the cone-beings' symbiosis with the flying polyps meant that their hosts were dying out, their reproductive cycle disrupted. The Yithians sought across the timestream and found a new set of potential hosts in humanity's immediate successor as dominant life form, blattid communal insects from 5 million years in the future whose sapience operates via distributed intelligence—in other words, a race of intelligent cockroach hive-minds. To power their cross-time migration from 65 million years in the past, the Yithians diverted an asteroid to impact with the Earth and captured the energy of the shockwave, escaping across time as they thought.

However, they did not reckon with Yog-Sothoth's implacable and omnipresent vigilance. In 1946 AD, the explosion of an atomic bomb at Bikini Atoll during a public test called Operation Crossroads created a small "tear" or gap in space-time through which the essence of Yog-Sothoth was able to seep through. The cavalier attitude of the military authorities toward radiological exposure at the time helped ensure that Yog-Sothoth could imprint itself upon one hapless crewman's genes. The man

returned home shortly thereafter and to him and his wife was born a Son of Yog-Sothoth, a hybrid being who, though seemingly and superficially human, partook not only of normal space-time materiality but also of the hyperdimensional non-Euclidean actuality of the Mythos. Grown to nearly adult size in a mere seven years, young Jed Whateley fashioned a false identity for himself as one Earl Sawyer (using the birth certificate of an infant who had died at birth), and ran away from his hateful and by-now insane mother to join the Navy, volunteering to serve on the very ship upon which his father died in 1951.

Yog-Sothoth foresees that the detonation of a second atomic bomb in the same location eight years later—Castle Bravo—will empower his "son" to create a temporal singularity that will trap the time-traveling Yithian minds in a nightmarish loop and enable him to recreate the strange symbiosis between flying polyp and cone-being, restoring them as servitors of Yog-Sothoth in the material world. The Son of Yog-Sothoth will use his newfound powers to transform radiation-stricken sailors into cone-beings capable of serving the flying polyps and restoring them to vitality once more.

The Spine

For this summary of the structure of the investigation, text in **bold** *indicates a section of the adventure with the same name.*

The crew of **USS *Bairoko*** awaits the detonation of **Shot Bravo** in the Bikini atoll. The bomb blast exposes them to a massive fallout cloud, during which some strange events occur, including the awakening of **The Son of Yog-Sothoth**. In the blast's **Immediate Aftermath**, the investigators witness the crew's erratic behavior and strange visions. When the fallout cloud settles, they are able to investigate **Anomalous Sightings** in the Castle area of operations, while yet plagued by **Shadows** out of time. Eventually, however, they are **Out of Time**, and the *Bairoko* must withstand an attack of flying polyps in the service of the Son of Yog-Sothoth as well as a mutiny by sailors transformed into monstrous cone-beings.

Victory Conditions

The investigators may consider themselves "victorious" if, minimally, they survive the aftermath of Castle Bravo with soul and sanity intact. More to the point, however, they win if they prevent the restoration of a symbiotic commensality between the flying polyps and the cone-beings.

THE INVESTIGATORS

Pregenerated Characters

Six pre-generated characters are provided, though the "sweet spot" for this adventure is probably 4 players. The additional characters can be held in reserve as replacements for those lost in play.

Lieutenant Davis

2nd Lt. (O-1) Enrique Chahan "Hank" Davis. A young Marine helicopter pilot assigned to the transport squadron detailed to the carrier for this project. He's half-Chamorro, a native of Guam (his adoptive father was a Marine hidden by locals during the Japanese occupation of the island in World War II). After enlisting in the Marines during the Korean War, he was sent to Officer Candidate School and flight training for helicopters. This is his first tour of duty. **Occupation:** Military. **Drive:** Adventure. **Pillars of Sanity:** Faith, Filial Piety. **Special:** ***Flight Status.*** Davis can spend Bureaucracy in order to gain access to a helicopter or plane for "missions." **Note:** Chamorro is a Malayo-Polynesian language like that of the Marshallese; the two tongues are similar but not identical (Chamorro has far more Spanish borrowings, for example), but they are similar enough that Lt. Davis can use his Language ability as if it were Oral History when dealing with the Marshallese.

Investigative Skills

Academic: Anthropology 1, History 1, Languages (Chamorro) 1, Law 1, Theology 1 .

Interpersonal: Assess Honesty 1, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 3, Intimidation 2, Reassurance 4, Streetwise 1.

Technical: Astronomy 2, Outdoorsman 2 .

General Skills

Athletics 10, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 4, Explosives2, Firearms 6, First Aid 4, Fleeing 8, Mechanical Repair 4, Piloting 10, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 4, Shadowing 4, Weapons 4.

Health 8, Stability 8, Sanity 6

Seaman Hargreave

Aerographer's Mate (E-3) Byron "Harvard" Hargreave. An Ivy League-educated enlisted sailor who joined the Navy to escape the effete confines of bourgeois society and is now a meteorologist assigned to the Navigation department aboard the *Bairoko*. This is his first tour of duty. **Occupation:** Dilettante. **Drive:** Ennui (Father's banking business is so *boring*, but Navy red tape no better; craves *stimulation*): **Pillars of Sanity:** Self-Reliance, Detached Irony. **Special: *Friends in High Places.*** Spend Credit Rating to call on personal connections who can make a stink or pull strings for you in Washington as needed—e.g., your uncle the Congressman, your father's admiral friend in the Pentagon. You can use this to insulate yourself from the normal inconveniences of a low position in the naval hierarchy.

Investigative Skills

Academic: Architecture 1, Art History 1, Cryptography 1, History 1, Languages (Japanese) 1, Library Use 1, Physics 2

Interpersonal: Assess Honesty 1, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 5, Flattery 2, Oral History 1, Reassurance 1.

Technical: Astronomy 2, Evidence Collection 1.

General Skills

Athletics 8, Conceal 2, Disguise 2, Electrical Repair 2, Explosives 2, Filch 2, Firearms 4, First Aid 2, Fleeing 8, Mechanical Repair 2, Preparedness 4, Riding 2, Scuffling 6, Sense Trouble 6, Shadowing 4, Stealth 2, Weapons 2.

Health 6, Stability 5, Sanity 4

Father Mullaney

Father Francis X. Mullaney (O-3). A young Navy chaplain from an Irish family in Boston. **Occupation:** Clergy. **Drive:** Compassion (wants to bring faith and healing to the benighted and desperate). **Pillars of Sanity:** Faith, Forgiveness. **Special: *Shepherd of the Flock.*** Once per session, Fr. Mullaney may refresh any Interpersonal ability after leading co-religionists in prayer or other spiritual undertaking.

Investigative Skills

Academic: Anthropology 1, Archaeology 1, Architecture 1, Art History 1, History 2, Languages 2 (Latin, Hebrew), Law 1, Library Use 2, Theology 4.

Interpersonal: Assess Honesty 2, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 3, Reassurance 4.

Technical: Art (painting) 1 .

General Skills

Athletics 6, First Aid 6, Fleeing 12, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 8, Sense Trouble 12.

Health 9, Stability 12, Sanity 6

Dr. Pettigrew

Dr. Nathaniel Pettigrew, M.D., Ph.D. A civilian A.E.C. scientist who studies the effects of radiological contamination on biological organisms. **Occupation:** Scientist. **Drive:** Scholarship (wants to contribute to the continuing expansion of human knowledge): "We owe it to science to investigate!" **Pillars of Sanity:** Scientific Progress, Reason. **Special: *Scientific Speculation.*** Dr. Pettigrew may make plausible guesses about the scientific causes of an otherwise mysterious phenomenon. In game terms, he may spend Biology, Geology, Medicine, or Physics in order to avoid up to 3 pts worth of Stability test occasioned by exposure to the Mythos, so long as he can explain it away it in scientific terms (i.e., aliens, advanced technology, time travel, and so forth).

Investigative Skills

Academic: Biology 2, Geology 1, Languages 2 (Latin, German), Library Use 2, Medicine 2, Physics 2.

Interpersonal: Bureaucracy 1, Credit Rating 4.

Technical: Chemistry 2, Evidence Collection 2, Forensics 1, Pharmacy 2, Photography 2.

General Skills

Athletics 2, Conceal 6, Disguise 4, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 4, Firearms 2, First Aid 8, Fleeing 6, Mechanical Repair 2, Psychoanalysis 8, Scuffling 3, Sense Trouble 4, Shadowing 2, Weapons 2.

Health 6, Stability 6, Sanity 4

Chief Walton

Chief Master-at-Arms (E-7) Malcolm Walton. Walton joined the Navy in the early days of World War II and fought in the Pacific theater, surviving surface battles and kamikaze attacks. As a master-at-arms, he is responsible for maintaining order aboard ship, conducting weapons training for the crew, leading

boarding parties and similar actions, and investigating crimes committed aboard the ship. **Occupation:** Police Detective. **Drive:** Duty (committed to defending U.S. from foreign threats). ***Combat Veteran*** (max Stability 10, +1 to hit in combat). **Pillars of Sanity:** Patriotism, Anti-Communism. **Special:** ***Security Chief.*** In the pursuit of your duties, you have automatic access to secure areas or equipment aboard the ship or base to which you are assigned; you may spend Cop Talk to gain access to top secret material.

Investigative Skills

Academic: Accounting 1, Cryptography 1, Law 2.

Interpersonal: Assess Honesty 4, Bureaucracy 2, Cop Talk 4, Credit Rating 3, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1.

Technical: Evidence Collection 2, Locksmith 1, Outdoorsman 1.

General Skills

Athletics 6, Conceal 3, Driving 2 , Explosives 1, Firearms 8, First Aid 2, Fleeing 8, Mechanical Repair 2, Piloting (small watercraft) 4, Preparedness 2, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 8, Shadowing 4, Stealth 3, Weapons 4.

Health 6, Stability 8, Sanity 4

Corpsman Zengetti

Hospital Corpsman Third Class (E-4) Giovanni "Johnny Z" Zengetti. A medic recently assigned to the ship, a second-generation Italian-American from New York. **Occupation:** Nurse. **Drive:** Sudden Shock (saw weird things in Korea during the war; awful memories drive him to self-medicate and engage in self-destructive behavior). ***Combat Veteran*** (max Stability 10, +1 to hit in combat). **Pillars of Sanity:** Loyalty, Sanctity of Human Life. **Special:** ***Lead by Example.*** You can spend 2 Reassurance points to steady a single panicking or erratic character as long as your own Stability is above 0; return the character's Stability to the lowest value of the next higher Stability category.

Investigative Skills

Academic: Biology 2, Library Use 1, Medicine 2.

Interpersonal: Assess Honesty 1, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 2, Oral History 2, Reassurance 4.

Technical: Chemistry 2, Evidence Collection 1, Lockpicking 1, Outdoorsman 1, Pharmacy 2.

General Skills

Athletics 6, Firearms 4, First Aid 8, Fleeing 6, Mechanical Repair 4, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 3, Sense Trouble 6, Stealth 3, Weapons 3.

Health 8, Stability 8, Sanity 6

THE ADVENTURE

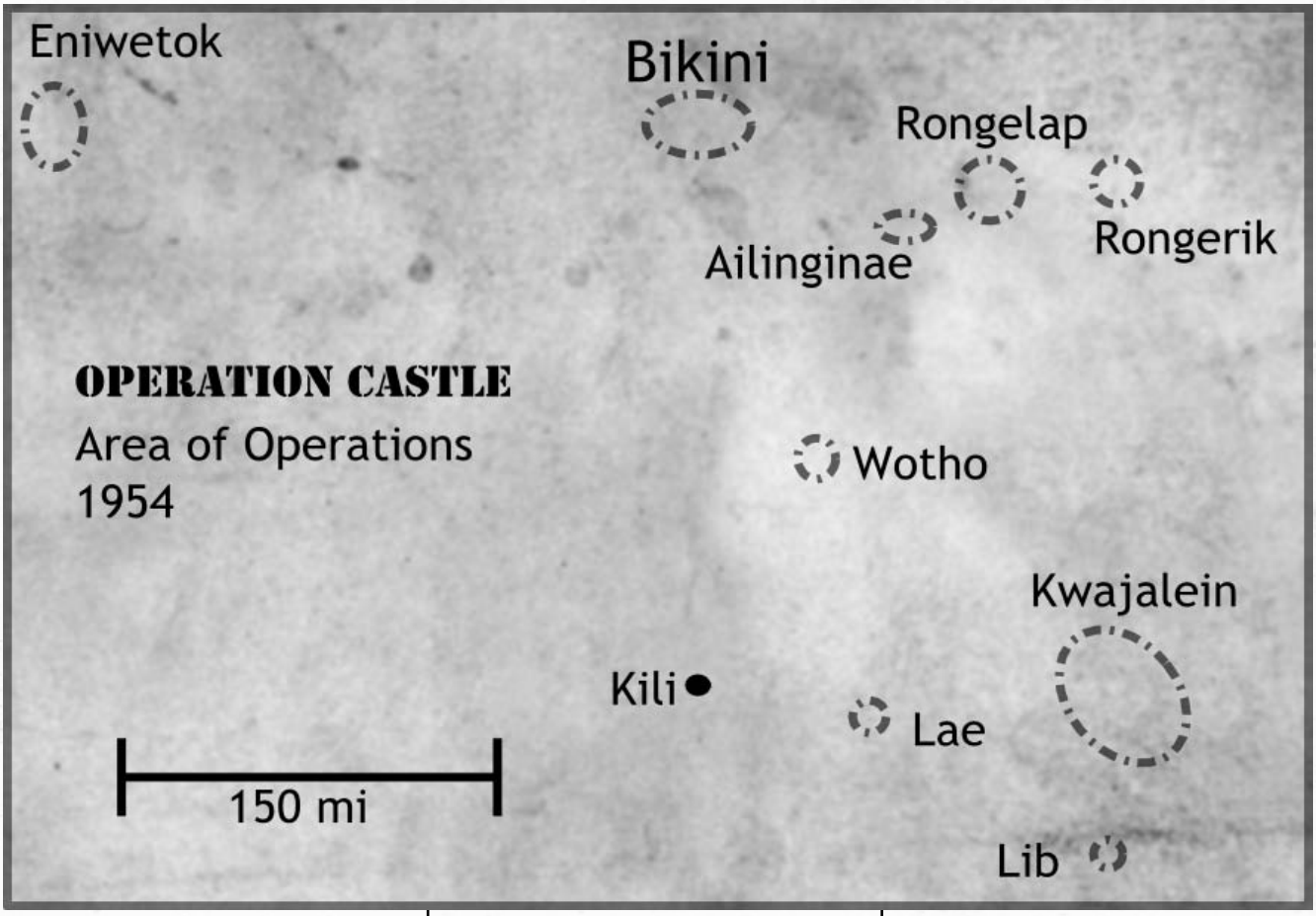
The USS Bairoko

The purpose of this scene is to establish the initial situation. It introduces the players to their characters, and the characters to each other. It also provides players with a chance to interact with some important non-player characters (NPCs).

It is March 1, 1954, early in the morning in the South Pacific. The USS *Bairoko*, an escort carrier, is on station 38 miles east of the bomb site on the western edge of Bikini Atoll, awaiting the detonaton of Operation Castle's first test, Shot Bravo. It is still dark; the bomb will go off at 0600—H-hour! The *Bairoko* has reconnaissance planes in the air to monitor the detonation and its aftermath. The other ships of Joint Task Force Seven are deployed further south, between Ailinginae and Wotho Atolls. Monitoring personnel at Rongerik and Eniwetok Atolls are standing by at their instruments. General Chambers, the leader of Joint Task Force Seven, has given the order to proceed from his command center on Kwajalein. The scientists in the control bunker on Bikini itself are counting down to zero, and the count is being relayed through a loudspeaker broadcasting to the crew assembled on the flight deck of the *Bairoko,* 557 feet long and 105 feet wide. It is H-hour minus 5 minutes, now.

Keeper, lay out or sketch the Operation Castle area map and indicate the positions of the test shot on the western edge of Bikini Atoll, the *Bairoko* off the southeastern corner of Bikini, the meteorological and scientific monitoring stations on Eniwetok and Rongerik, and the U.S. base in the southeastern quadrant of Kwajalein.

The characters are standing on the



deck of an aircraft carrier waiting for the detonation. Note the presence of Command Master Chief Don Bodine among them, a garrulous presence for whom witnessing atomic explosions is old hat, as well as that of Corpsman Earl Sawyer, known to them as rather a naif. Give the players the background knowledge their investigators possess. Allow the players to interact in character. The scene ends when all have said all they wish to say.

Background Knowledge

You should prepare a small card or handout with the relevant knowledge for each investigator, or brief each player separately before you begin. If a particular character isn't being played, his background knowledge becomes available as a floating bonus clue.

Lt. Davis. Marine Helicopter Transportation Squadron 362 and its 12 unarmed Sikorsky H-19 Chickasaws (top speed 100 mph, 450 mile range, 12 passenger capacity) is a fine outfit, I guess, but wouldn't it be something to be able to get into one of those six F4U Corsairs (top speed 425 mph, 1000 mile range, room for pilot and observer) from Composite Squadron 3 and fly it around! They're only equipped with cameras for reconnaissance, but still! If the Air Boss wasn't such a control freak, maybe I'd have a chance to take one for a spin one of these days.

Seaman Hargreave. I'll be lucky to see anything when they set off the Bravo shot, since the test site is so far below the horizon. I suppose the observation gallery outside of Flight Ops at the top of the carrier island will give a better view, but the CO is up there with his binoculars. Maybe I'll get a better chance at Eniwetok. They're setting up a test bomb code-named Ramrod for Shot Echo there now. The plan is to set it off at the end of the month; I suppose I could try to pull a few strings to be assigned as the CO's runner, who mostly gets to stand around and drink coffee unless the intercom goes out.

Fr. Mullaney. It is a great sorrow how we've displaced the Bikini islanders from their homes for these tests. They were first relocated to Rongerik, and then when that proved unsatisfactory, to the island of Kili, which in some ways proved worse. An article in LIFE magazine several years ago quoted "King" Juda, the *iroij* or chief of the Bikinians, in a memorably poignant complaint, saying, "Rongerik was not a good place. The fish there are poisonous, the coconuts are smaller, and the lagoon is haunted by a poison spirit who sleeps under the waters. We wanted to return to Bikini, but they told us we could not. Finally, we

agreed to come to Kili. But it is not like Bikini. At Bikini, one could always go to another island. But Kili is not an atoll, so it is always the same. Sleep, wake up. Kili. Again, sleep, wake up. Kili. Kili is a prison."Those poor people.

Dr. Pettigrew. When Castle Bravo detonates, we'll see an area of illumination on the horizon, like distant lightning perhaps, and then three minutes later the sound of the blast will reach us. At this distance, it should be much attenuated. At the ship's top speed of 22 mph, it would take the *Bairoko* about an hour and three-quarters to cover the same distance. One of the two 36-passenger plywood "Higgins boats" aboard the *Bairoko* would take just over twice as long—three point five hours to cover the ground that *sound* does in just over three minutes and that *light* does nearly instantaneously! Fascinating! When I see him next, I'll share my observations with the Flight Operations Officer, Lt. Cdr. Jermyn, since he has demonstrated a keen interest in applying mathematical principles to logistical problems.

ChiefWalton. The Reds would stop at nothing to get their hands on America's atomic secrets. Luckily, the devices code-named Zombie and Morgenstern, to be used in Castle Romeo and Castle Koon—two later shots in this operation—are stored in ammunition bunkers at the U.S. base on Kwajalein under heavy guard. They require orders signed by General Chambers to be released for any purpose. As far as the *Bairoko* itself goes, it's too bad there are no armed aircraft aboard, but at least it is armed with two 5"/38 caliber guns [*+8 damage*] controlled from the bridge as well as an array of 20-mm Oerlikon [*+4 damage; add 2 to Mechanical Repair pool to operate each turn with 2-man crew*] and 40-mm Bofors [*+6 damage; add 4 to Mechanical Repair pool to operate with 3-man crew*] autocannons in tandem [*roll 2 dice plus bonus for damage*] and triple [*roll 3 dice plus bonus for damage*] mounts for air defense. Still, Communist brainwashing can't be discounted. Sabotage is always a possibility. And it's a shame that Lieutenant Delapore, the Deck Officer, is such a milquetoast—things could use a little tightening up around here.

Corpsman Zengetti. This guy Sawyer standing next to me is a strange bird. All of the guys in our section say so. "He's not all there in the head," one of my buddies told me the other day. "He doesn't remember where he was on V-J day, and I remember that like it was yesterday!" He has friends who'll stick up for him though, like the one who said "Earl's just been really sheltered. Everyone else has stories about where they grew up, goofing around in high school with their buddies, a girl they miss—but Earl, nothing. He doesn't talk much about his family, either. I think they kept him mostly inside. That's why he's always reading those fancy books. I'm glad he's finally getting a chance to see the world."

The Old Salt

Command Master Chief (E-9) Don Bodine. Bodine is the senior enlisted man on the *Bairoko,* and at age 48 has served 30 years in the Navy and seen action in two wars. He is responsible for the morale and well-being of the enlisted personnel aboard the ship. He intends to retire at the end of his tour, and is wont to go on about his time in the Navy, the comrades he's sailed with, and the things he's seen. Bodine likes to think he's helping younger sailors by granting them the wisdom of his experience, and he is—albeit in a somewhat self-aggrandizing way, as he is the hero of all his stories. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Flattery** ("Golly, Master Chief, you've sure seen a lot of stuff") and **Oral History** ("Boy, Chief, this must be like dealing with those kamikazes during the Big One, huh?").

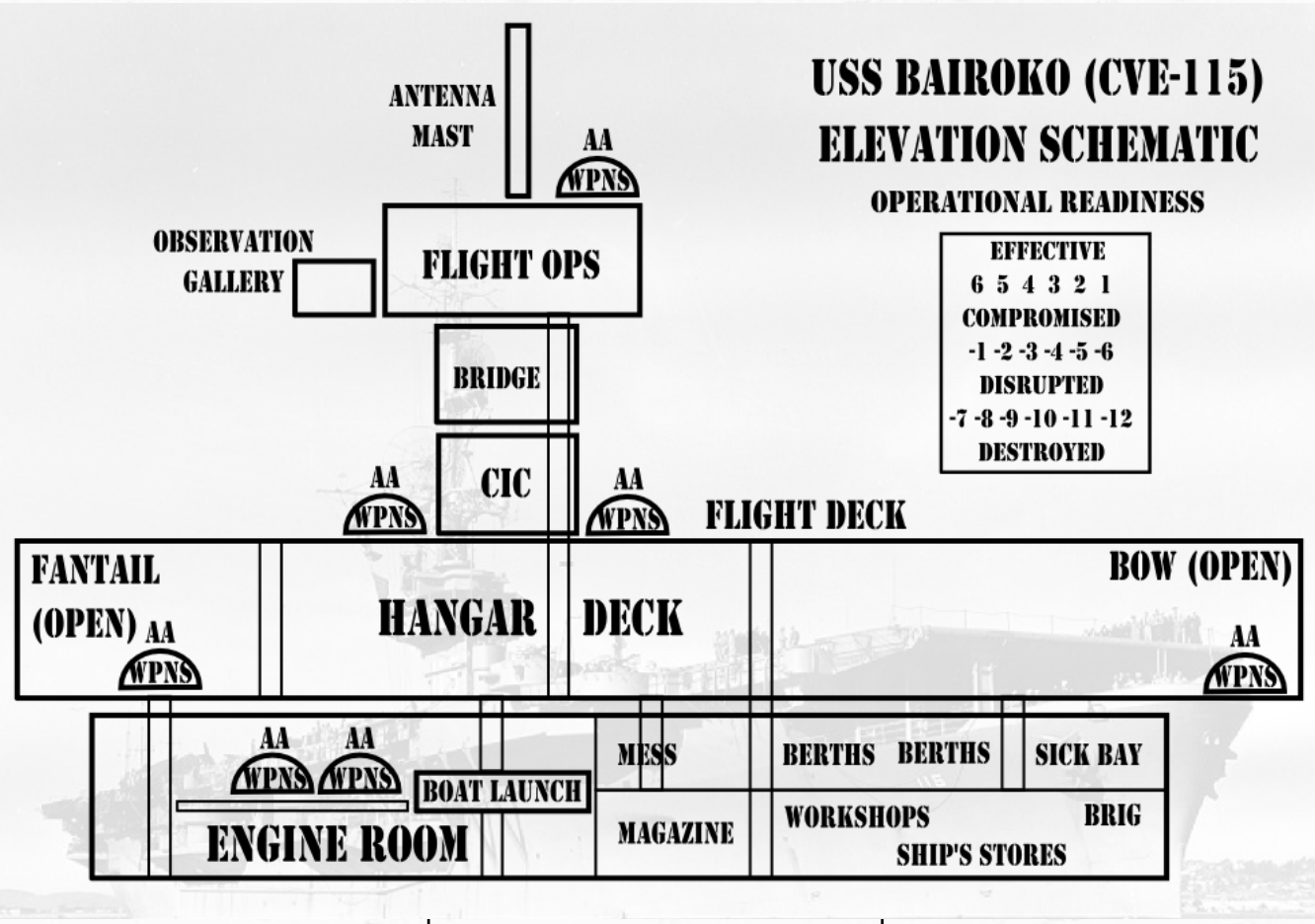
Skills. Athletics 4, Electrical Repair 3, Firearms 3, Piloting (watercraft only) 3, Health 6, Sanity 3, Scuffling 4, Stability 6.

Oral History (core clue). The USS *Bairoko* wasn't commissioned until the end of World War II, so we were too late to see action against the Japs. In 1946, we were at the Bikini atoll for Operation Crossroads, when the Air Force—it was still part of the Army back then—tried to show it could destroy a fleet with an atom bomb. They tried to put her out to pasture after that, but they had to bring her back for the Korean War. On a shakedown cruise in '51, after they brought her out of mothballs, there was an explosion on the hangar deck. It caught fire, which spread to the deck below. Five men died before it could be put out, and the ship was laid up for months. I knew them all, too—good men, they were. But now here we are again, testing the 'nukes' again. Good old *Bairoko!*

The Innocent

Medical Corpsman (E-3) Earl Sawyer. Sawyer is quiet and looks uncomfortable in his own skin, a gangly youth still in the throes of late adolescence, with that ill-at-ease, half-formed quality that some particularly awkward teenagers have. *Abilities.* Athletics 8, Firearms 7, Health 13, Scuffling 17. *Hit Threshold:* 4. *Alertness Modifier:* +2. *Stealth Modifier:* +1. *Weapon:* -1 (inhumanly strong fist), by weapon type.

Assess Honesty. It's funny how nervous Sawyer is around Bodine; he gets even more tongue-tied than normal, and won't even open his mouth to say anything beyond "Yes, chief," or "No, chief." **(leverage: grief-stricken mother).** Sawyer's telling the truth as far it goes, but there's more to it than that. He's got a lot of anger towards his mother (also **Psychoanalysis**). **(leverage: skin**



condition). Maybe he should have it looked at again, if it's bothering him so much.

Evidence Collection. There is faintly acrid scent around Sawyer, like he's been working with chemicals, perhaps.

Oral History. Sawyer is from Arkham, Massachusetts. He has no family; his father died when he was young and his mother went crazy with grief. They had to put her in a home.

Reassurance (leverage: acrid scent). I have a skin condition, Sawyer says, embarassed. It's nothing. The doctor prescribed some medicine. **(leverage: Bodine).** I just get nervous because he might have known my dad. He—he died in a fire on this ship during the war.

Shot Bravo

The purpose of this scene is to drive the plot forward. The detonation of the atomic bomb serves as its inciting incident, and the reactions of the investigators to (a) the unexpected power of the bomb, and (b) the subsequent fallout that strikes the ship provide a space for character development and action. More importantly, however, the scene provides some initial clues by foreshadowing greater weirdness to come.

Begin this scene by laying out or sketching the *Bairoko* elevation schematic. Specify the positions of the investigators as well as of the CO (in the observation gallery), the XO (in the CIC), the Air Boss (in Flight Ops), and the Deck Officer (on the Flight Deck). Inform the players that the "Operational Readiness" status of the *Bairoko* is "effective," but that things might happen in play that render it less so. Then proceed from the detonation of Castle Bravo through the rain of fallout and its aftermath. The scene ends when the *Bairoko* has cleared the area affected by fallout.

An Escort Carrier At Sea

Imagine a floating city of over a thousand men, including barbers, carpenters, cooks, electricians, and even shopkeepers as well as the pilots, mechanics, and other operatives and technicians needed for industrialized warfare. In the center of the long flat flight deck is a multi-story "island" where command and control functions are carried out. The flight deck is located above the hangar deck where aircraft are stored and maintained. Below this is a complex labyrinth of passageways, bulkheads, and

Movement Rules

When it is critical to know how long someone takes to move from one place to another aboard the ship, use this rule. Each named area aboard the ship (Flight Deck, Hangar Deck, Berths, etc.) is a "zone." The thin vertical rectangles are "ladders" enabling passage between decks. Moving from one zone to another in a single action is automatic (i.e., Difficulty 1). Each additional zone of distance to be moved increases the Difficulty of the Athletics or Fleeing test by +2 (so two zones is Difficulty 3, three zones is difficulty 5, and so forth). Each level of ladder to be traversed increases the Difficulty by 1. If you fail, you wind up halfway between where you started from and where you wanted to go, and suffer 1d6-3 damage to Health (minimum 0, obviously).

Communication Rules

An intercom system allows the CIC two-way communication with most of the rest of the ship on a selective basis (i.e., it may address all or some of the rest of the ship; other areas may only talk to the CIC). The only places not accessible via intercom are the Flight Deck and the exposed portions of the Hangar Deck, though the various anti-aircraft gun emplacements are wired in. A loudspeaker allows broadcasting from the Bridge to sailors on deck. Additionally, a telephone network connects working areas belowdecks and on the island (i.e., all but the Berths, Flight Deck, AA Guns, and Hangar Deck) with each other on a point-to-point basis. A limited number of walkie-talkies (portable two-way radios) can be issued for specific assignments with a spend.

compartments organized with an eye towards maximizing storage rather than ease of passage. Life aboard ship is cramped; the corridors are narrow and the "ladders" or staircases are steep. Berthing compartments sleep 30 sailors in bunks or "racks" in ten stacks of three, surrounded by tight vertical lockers in which to stow their gear. Officers are allotted slightly more space, but their quarters are tight as well.

The Captain and His Staff

The CO is in the observation gallery (aka "buzzards' row), waiting for the bomb to go off. The XO is in the Combat Information Center, monitoring radio traffic as well as radar and sonar data. The Flight Operations Officer, or "Air Boss," is in the Flight Operations Center ("Flight Ops") keeping track of the recon flights that are in the air. The Deck Officer is on the Flight Deck, waiting to resume normal operations after the detonation.

Commanding Officer, USS *Bairoko* (CO). Captain (O-6) Richard D. Hogle. Captain Hogle commands the *Bairoko*; he is cautious and by-the-book. The CO is responsible for ensuring that the ship's mission is fulfilled. Hogle has been in command less than a year. He hopes for an uneventful tour so that he can "punch his command ticket"; that is, get the experience on his resume he needs to be selected for prestigious Pentagon jobs. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Bureaucracy** ("Don't worry, sir, the general will never find out") and **Law** ("Sir, the regulations are very clear on this").

Executive Officer (XO). Commander (O-5) Martin C. Reeves. Reeves is the *Bairoko's* second-in-command; he is responsible for ensuring that the day-to-day operations of the ship proceed smoothly and efficiently. Reeves is a hustler and a wheeler-dealer who is at least a little crooked but also sharp, and extremely knowledgeable about the ship's technical capabilities and resources. He wants opportunities to get a little something for himself without crossing a line into outright criminality. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Bargaining** ("Hey, sir, if you let me talk to the prisoners for five minutes, I'll tell my buddy in the Supply Department on Kwajalein to give us a higher priority for ship's exchange resupply") or **Streetwise** ("Sir, do you want to get in on a poker game in the Operations wardroom tonight? The stakes are pretty high, though").

Flight Operations Officer (FOO). Lieutenant Commander (O-4) Felix A. Jermyn. Lt. Cdr. Jermyn is the "Air Boss," responsible for keeping track of all the birds that *Bairoko* has in the air at any given moment, and can approve or scrub missions requiring the use of aircraft. He is a control freak who considers himself a hard-headed realist. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of empirical argument, such as **Physics** ("There's no way a fully loaded helicopter can get there fast enough") or **Accounting** ("That's a hundred thousand dollar aircraft out there, sir.")

Deck Officer. Lieutenant (O-3) Wilbur Delapore. Lt. Delapore is responsible for making sure that operations on the flight and hangar decks are proceeding efficiently and for keeping things generally shipshape. He has access to much shipboard equipment While generally diligent, he is nervous and indecisive, and has a tough time thinking while under pressure. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Intimidation** ("Sir, if you don't do something about this, I will!") or **Reassurance** ("Sir, this is absolutely what needs to be done. No question").

Operational Readiness

The ship's operational readiness (OR) rating begins at 6; this is essentially a free-floating pool of bonus points that the investigators may use to do things aboard the ship.

Effective. The ship and crew are ready for action. Investigators may spend points of OR to add to task rolls as desired; these spends represent using the ship's resources to complete tasks more efficiently or with less effort on the part of the investigator.

Compromised. The ship has suffered minor damage or personnel loss in such a way as to somewhat degrade its capabilities. Investigators may no longer spend points of OR, and attempts to influence the chain of command are at +1 difficulty, as ship's officers will be interested in addressing more immediate problems.

Disrupted. The ship has suffered severe damage or personnel loss, and its capabilities as a result are severely degraded. Parts of the ship are out of contact with other parts, and attempts to influence the chain of command to do anything other than take immediate steps to save the ship are not permitted. Investigative activities are not possible, and the investigators may be required to step up and take charge of frightened, confused, or demoralized sailors. The chaos of the situation may require a Stability test of somewhere between 2 and 4 points.

Destroyed. The ship is completely stricken. All hands abandon ship! The catastrophe may require a Stability test of somewhere between 4 and 6 points.

Going Up the Chain

Of course, at a level above even the commander of the ship is the man in charge of Operation Castle, General Clarkson.

Commander, Operation Castle (JTFCOM). Major General (O-8) Percy W. Clarkson. Clarkson, the commander of Joint Task Force 7, runs the show from the U.S. base on Kwajalein Island. He is not particularly susceptible to any given means, and usually will only be a disembodied voice on the radio—if that—during the adventure. However, the atomic buck stops with him.

During play, investigators may want the chain of command to do something for them that they can't do on their own: call the entire crew to battle stations, change the destination of the ship, and other ship-wide or mission-consequential actions. Some of the time, this will be mere window-dressing, and you should hand-wave it so when the point is merely to set the scene for the next cool thing the investigators want to do. At other times, however, convincing the chain of command that a certain course of action is *immediately* and *absolutely* necessary can be a moment of high drama in the adventure, and so should represented by a contest. See p. 59 of the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules for its discussion of Investigative contests.

Influencing Higher Ranking Officers. Use the rank of the officer capable of making the decision that the investigators want made as the Difficulty of a skill roll to persuade them to issue the order or give their permission. Officers use their full rank, Enlisted use half rounded down. Modify this Difficulty upward by a point or three if what the investigators want is particularly strange, counter-intuitive, or impractical. So, for example, an effort to convince the ship's executive officer (an O-5) that everyone with radiation burns should be locked in the brig is both strange and impractical, and thus gets a +2 Difficulty, for a total of Difficulty 7. The investigators may then spend Investigative abilities for a bonus to the roll, justifying those spends by role-playing their interactions with other officers and non-coms whose expertise or responsibilities gives their professional opinion weight as well as with the decision-maker himself. *If they spend enough, the roll is a mere formality.*

Example. *The investigators may decide first to spend a point of* **Medicine** *to review medical histories with the Ship's Doctor and get him to agree that the radiation victims have been acting strangely and, with a point of* **Bureaucracy***, to write a recommendation that they be separated from the rest of the crew. Similarly, they remind Master Chief Bodine of his responsibility for the morale of the crew* **(Flattery)** *and spend a point of* **Architecture** *to make a plan for securing the affected personnel. Bodine agrees to let the XO know that their request is do-able. Thus armed, they approach the XO and, in role-playing the interaction, say that Communist brainwashing is a possibility. The Keeper gives a +1 to the roll for a two-point* **History** *spend for this. They also spend* **Reassurance** *to convince the XO that if he gives the go-ahead, they'll get him the proof he wants that the radiation victims are a danger to the ship. The total bonus is now +6, which means that even if the investigator rolls a 1, the effort succeeds. The XO tells the investigators to get 'em locked up, pronto.*

"Now Hear This..."

The radio voice from the control bunker on Bikini Atoll announces the approach of the detonation, patched through the ship's intercom. It counts down from 10. Sense Trouble at Difficulty 4. Those who fail are at worst indifferent to the coming explosion, but those who make the roll think, *This could be really bad. Do we really know what we're doing here? How do we know the whole atmosphere won't ignite?*

When the count reaches zero, there is a momentary pause, then the sky lights up as if it were day for a long moment and then goes black. Remaining in the northwest is a patch of pink radiance that covers a quarter of the sky and slowly fades over the course of several minutes, becoming dark again just as a loud sustained rumbling reaches the ship, growing in intensity before slackening and fading away.

Everyone who witnesses the explosion and feels the rumbling should test Stability. Those who were able to Sense Trouble make the Stability roll at Difficulty 4 to avoid a 3-point loss. Those who *did not* Sense Trouble make the roll at Difficulty 3 to avoid a 2-point loss (because at times ignorance is bliss).

Much of the crew witnessing the shot is disconcerted; they begin to mutter and complain among themselves. ***Dock the ship a point of Operational Readiness unless an investigator makes a spend to do something to stiffen their morale*** (e.g., Reassurance, Intimidation)**.**

Floating Core Clue. In the immediate aftermath, Earl Sawyer will approach one of the investigators—good candidates are Walton, Zengetti, or Davis—look at him intently, and say with some degree of heat, "Hey! This time, *don't shoot me in the head* and I won't let them tear you apart!" Then he'll look confused and walk away, seemingly embarassed. He will not know why he said what he said, although he does remember saying it.

A Grey and Dirty Snow

Much of the crew has already dispersed belowdecks to begin their duties for the day. The CO will head for the CIC to consult with the XO about post-shot operations. Master Chief Bodine goes below.

In a few moments, the sky fills with grey clouds moving in rapidly from the northwest and obscuring the approaching dawn. Anyone witnessing their approach may Sense Trouble at Difficulty 3. *Those clouds aren't normal,* the investigator realizes. Allow anyone who makes this roll to do one thing: shout a warning, move toward cover, make a Preparedness roll (to don protective gear, e.g.), and so forth.

A fine gray "snow" of sticky, gritty powder begins to fall. Anyone outside in it (i.e., on the Flight Deck, the exposed portions of the Hangar Deck, or Buzzards' Row) should test Stability (Difficulty 3) to avoid a 2 point loss. *What is this uncanny stuff?* Investigators may use their abilities to make sense of the phenomenon.

Biology. It must be seawater mixed with coral from the atoll, blown to smithereens by the blast and hurled into the sky.

Evidence Collection. It looks like snow, at first, but it's warm. It's like sticky sand, or pieces of burnt paper. It's sticking to my clothes, and the deck. It's probably dangerous.

Medicine. Don't touch it or breathe it in! It's probably poisonous!

Outdoorsman. When stuff comes out of the sky, the first thing you do is seek shelter.

Physics. That's not snow—it's radioactive fallout! Don't let it get on you!

A Dose of Their Own Medicine

There are about two dozen sailors scattered over the Flight Deck prepping it for returning aircraft and other functions. They will continue to perform their duties even as the fallout descends. Lt. Delapore will dither indecisively. It is up to the investigators to take action.

Assign each investigator an initial Dose—representing exposure to the fallout. Anyone who left the Flight Deck prior to the radioactive precipitation striking the deck is Dose 0. Anyone who left the Flight Deck after it began is Dose 1 (for those who fled quickly) or Dose 2 (for those who retreated more slowly). Anyone who is still on the Flight Deck or the exposed portion of the Hangar Deck is Dose 3.

Play out the action in rounds. Ask each player what his or her investigator does. Make skill rolls as needed to resolve movement or other actions. Each round the investigator remains in an exposed position (i.e., on the Flight Deck or the exposed portions of the Hangar Deck), increase his Dose by 1.

At the end of the third round and each round thereafter, have the highest ranked investigator test the ship's Operational Readiness. The Difficulty of the test is 8. The roll is at +1 for each successfully completed investigator action intended to speed the ship out of harm's way or clear the decks until the fallout rain stops. For example, running to the CIC to let the XO know about the fallout would count, as would taking charge of crewmen on deck and leading them below. If the roll is made, then it is "All Clear": the ship has been secured and sailed out of the fallout

cloud, and now it is just a matter of cleaning up. The difficulty of the roll decreases by one for each round after the third. End the scene when the roll is made, or when the action is complete.

Dauntless the Slug-Horn to My Lips I Set

However, other things are happening at this time. During the first round of ***A Dose of Their Own Medicine***, above, the investigator closest to Sawyer experiences a weird vision. He's not on the *Bairoko* anymore; instead, he's standing in front of a looming tower of black rock that rises from a lush plain of ferns and palm trees, among which dart brightly colored lizards—some with feathers! There are openings high up on the flanks of the tower, with a spiraling ramp of some sort of fibrous matting leading to the ground.

Architecture. Openings on the lower level have been sealed off; it is as if the tower were less a fortress to keep things *out* than a prison to keep something *in*.

Biology. The trees are cycads and gingkos, which became the dominant flora during the Mesozoic era, which ended when the dinosaurs disappeared.

Evidence Collection. Several wide trails lead from the foot of the spiraling ramp at the base of the tower off into the forest. There seems to be some sort of gummy residue on the trails.

Geology. The black stone seems to be basalt, a type of igneous rock. And while the tower seems obviously to have been constructed, the rock of which it is comprised doesn't appear to have been quarried *per se*. The regularity of the columnar fracturing implies that it was constructed by incredibly precise control of massive lava fountains that were then rapidly cooled in place—as if someone had built an igloo by spraying water up from a firehose!

Outdoorsman. There's no place on earth today with animals like that!

The investigator may wish to try to "snap out of it." Instead of investigating, test Stability at Difficulty 4. On a success, the vision ends. Otherwise, it continues. If the investigator tries to do anything other than just look around, he feels that *his body is the wrong shape*, makes a 3 point Stability test (Difficulty 4), and the vision ends.

While the investigator is having this vision, other investigators may notice him standing with a wild-eyed expression on his face, staring as if he doesn't know where he is. If addressed, he will not speak except to make strange gurgling noises, like he's forgotten how to talk. A 1 pt **Reassurance** spend might bring him back to himself.

Man Overboard!

At the end of the first round, some sailors on the deck will begin to complain of superficial burns received from the fallout—"Hey! This stuff is burning me! Ouch!" Captain Hogle will summon Dr. Pettigrew or another investigator who has some expertise to

the CIC to advise him on the proper course of action.

Floating Core Clue. Meanwhile, other crewmen will seem to experience some sort of fugue-like dislocation as well. One drops to his belly and begins to crawl in an aimless fashion. Another starts to babble in some sort of gibberish (although **Anthropology** will allow an investigator to suppose the sounds to be speech related to the Khoisan family, the click-languages of southern Africa used by Bushmen and others). Test Stability (Difficulty 4) against a 2 pt loss

Floating Core Clue. On the second round, Sawyer accompanies an investigator who goes to help those men; failing that, he runs toward them on his own. In either case, he stops short at some point and looks around as if he had heard something and was looking for its source. He studies the top of the island for a long moment before getting back to his duties. "I thought I saw something up there," he will say if asked. What? "I—I couldn't tell." **Assess Honesty** provides the intuition that not only does Sawyer think the investigator wouldn't believe the truth, Sawyer isn't sure if *he himself* believes it.

A third stricken crewman dashes off toward the edge of the Flight Deck. Anyone who wishes to stop him has to catch up to him. Make three Athletics tests, with success or failure on earlier tests influencing the Difficulty of subsequent ones. So the first roll is at Difficulty 4. On a failure, the second test is at Difficulty 5; on a success, the second test is at Difficulty 3. If the second test is failed, the Difficulty increases by one; if it is successful, the Difficulty decreases by one. Success or failure on the third test determines if the fleeing crewman is caught in time. If he is not stopped, he leaps off the edge of the deck and into the ocean, 50 feet below. Test Stability (Difficulty 4) against a 3 pt loss for witnessing this apparently suicidal act. But the crewman will be in the water, calling weakly for help; he was badly injured by the impact with the water and is barely conscious. It will take the heroic effort of the investigators to rescue him before he drowns. Allow an **Outdoorsman** spend to be used to let a player freely narrate his character's heroism; otherwise, some combination of Athletics, Piloting, Mechanical Repair, and First Aid tests can be employed to determine if the investigators succeed in their rescue.

The Son of Yog-Sothoth

Use this information to respond to investigator efforts to make sense of Sawyer's place in all this, as well as to generate "antagonist reaction" in the form of bizarre and unsettling events in which he is involved. You should include Sawyer in some or all of the activities embarked upon by the investigators at this point; as a medical corpsman, he is plausibly available for a variety of missions or assignments.

Sawyer now hears the voice of Yog-Sothoth in his head. The Outer God permeates time and space but can only take action through his instruments, such as the flying polyps (long dormant since the suborning of their servile commensals the cone-beings by the Yithians in the distant past) and hybrid beings like Sawyer himself, if conditions are right. The detonation of Castle Bravo created such conditions, at least briefly. Now the contact is imperfect, and filtered through Sawyer's understandings and expectations. He thinks his father's ghost is talking to him. He knows that the "spider-ghosts" (Yithians) are bad, and that they're *all around*, hiding among the crew of the *Bairoko*. He has a vague idea that he has to grant "a powerful blessing" to the radiation victims, and that this will help his father. He does not realize that the effect will be to initiate a gruesome transformation that will turn them into cone-beings.

Meet "Earl Sawyer"

Bureaucracy. Sawyer's personnel records show that he requested duty aboard the *Bairoko* right after basic training, but was assigned to the USS *Estes*, an amphibious command ship. He spent some time on Bikini Atoll during the construction phase of Operation Castle, and then he was temporarily assigned to the *Bairoko* once non-essential personnel were evacuated from the island. Sawyer's medical records may also be obtained (also **Cop Talk**).

Chemistry (leverage: Sawyer smells funny, or the jar from his foot locker). That odor is probably coal or pine tar. It is a highly flammable substance used to treat dandruff and other skin conditions as well as head and body lice (also **Medicine** or **Pharmacy**).

Evidence Collection (leverage: access to Sawyer's personal effects). In Sawyer's locker, investigators find an unlabeled jar of a viscous brown stuff with a pungent chemical smell as well as an envelope addressed to Earl Sawyer at his shipboard address; the return address is from a "M. Whateley" at a street address in Arkham, Massachusetts. Inside the envelope is a birth certificate from the records clerk in Arkham for Jedediah Whateley, born December 1947 to parents Josiah and Mary, with a big black X scrawled across it, as well as a handful of photos, similarly defaced. One is an official-style portrait of a smiling young sailor who resembles Sawyer; Master Chief Bodine can confirm that this is Joe Whateley. The others show pictures of a boy and his mother over the years. The boy ages from infancy to

a hulking teenager; anyone who knows Sawyer by sight will recognize him. The mother doesn't seem to change much in the photos, except for looking more and more harried and increasingly unhappier. There is also a copy of a slim hardbound volume of morbid avant-garde poetry by one E.E. Derby, entitled *Azathoth and Other Horrors,* and a copy of a dense science magazine (also **Lockpicking, 1 pt spend**).

> **Photography** *allows an investigator to notice that the woman's garb and hairstyle in the photographs don't change as much as they should over what should be about fifteen years (also* **Art History***).*

Interrogation, 1 pt spend (leverage: Sawyer's true age). "I don't know why I'm this way. My dad said I just growed, like Topsy. Heh. Mom hated that. I don't know. Why are you the way you are?"

Intimidation. "You're one of *them,* aren't you? My father told me that they were all around. He said that the spider-ghosts would try to stop me. I won't let you."

Medicine. According to his induction examination, Earl Sawyer presented with what appeared to be a moderate case of *psoriasis vulgaris,* a non-contagious autoimmune condition that produces scaly silver or reddened skin plaques. In this case, the disease was noted to affect his upper arms, chest, and back. "Born that way," the report reads. A Navy physician prescribed coal tar for the condition, which was not regarded as a bar to enlistment. A medical examination of Sawyer's current skin condition reveals that it is spreading, thickening, and becoming more rugose (wrinkled) and squamous (scaly). There also seems to be some sort of bluish-purple pus seeping from between the folds of Earl Sawyer's scaly skin, which he will do his best to keep concealed. The condition is bizarre and unsettling and anyone witnessing the affliction should test Stability at Difficulty 4 for a 2 point loss, doubled for anyone without **Medicine** or First Aid.

(also **Biology** and **Library Use**).

Reassurance. "I think the ghost of my dad is talking to me now. He died in fire, on this ship, and the atomic fire woke him up. I can hear his voice, whispering to me. He says I'm his son, and he's proud of me. And he wants me to save his people from the spider-ghosts."

Sawyer's Books

Among Sawyer's possessions are an abstruse physics journal and a book of poetry.

Physics. Sawyer owns a copy of the journal ***Physical Review,*** vol. 47, no. 10. from 1935. It has been stamped "Miskatonic University Library." Inside is a well-known three-page article by "A. Einstein, B. Podolsky, and N. Rosen," which argues that quantum mechanics is an incomplete description of reality because of the contradiction engendered by the fact that in quantum mechanics, knowledge of one physical quantity precludes knowledge of a second, which means that "(1) either the description of reality given by the wave function in quantum mechanics is not complete or (2) these two quantities cannot have simultaneous reality." However, it is clear that it is possible to make predictions about one physical quantity based on its interaction with another, therefore the latter possibility is false. Ergo, one must conclude "that the description of reality as given by a quantum wave function is not complete." In the margins, Sawyer has written "The observing consciousness is the center of all calculation."

Library Use, 1 pt spend (leverage: Sawyer's copy of *Azathoth and Other Horrors*). Derby's book is discussed on p. 105 of the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules. This thin book is a clue tome for this adventure. The entire book may be pored over in an hour; the spend obtains the clue after a few moments of flipping through its contents. It was published in 1919 by Golden Goblin Press; the book plate reads, "EX LIBRIS" with "Josiah Whateley" filled in with pen in elegant letters. A dog-eared page contains an underlined stanza in a poem called "The Opener of the Way" that seems to be about a dream-journey through a starry void. The poem's narrator, in a state of anxious dread, ascends the spiraling stairs of a stone tower where a shrouded figure waits behind a shimmering veil. He knows that when he reaches the top he will be tested, and if he succeeds he will gain the Key to the Gate but if he fails he will be doomed. Finally he comes to a despairing epiphany: he has already failed the test, and the endless climb is his doom. In the margins, someone has written "my dream!!!" and "Yog-Sothoth?" The handwriting is not Sawyer's, as **Crytography** confirms.

> **Cthulhu Mythos.** The poem is clearly an allegorical reference to the spell for summoning Yog-Sothoth, the Outer God co-terminous with all time and space, who is sometimes called "The Opener of the Way" by sorcerors who wish to look upon or even journey to distant places and times. The summoning requires the ascent of a high tower or hill as part of the ritual.

The Absent Father

There are ways of finding out more about Sawyer's father.

Library Use (leverage: Sawyer's father, 1951 *Bairoko* fire). The ship's logbooks show that five men died in that fire three years ago, but none of them had Earl Sawyer's last name. But

one of the men who died was from Sawyer's hometown in Massachusetts. His name was Josiah Whateley, and he was 27 when he died. So this Whateley couldn't have been Sawyer's father—he would have only been 9 years old when Sawyer was born.

Oral History (leverage: asking Bodine about Josiah Whateley). Joe Whateley served on the *Bairoko* from 1946 until he died in 1951. He was on the hangar deck when the fire started. I wrote a letter to his wife, but I never heard back from her. They had a little boy, too—he must be eight or nine by now. During Operation Crossroads, we spent a lot of time together out on the surviving ships in the lagoon, working on decontamination details in our shirtsleeves.

The Powers of Paradox

As a temporal singularity that serves as the strange attractor defining a closed time-like curve, Earl Sawyer will increasingly manifest some strange and paradoxical abilities. Witnessing these paradoxical events subjects the witness to a Mythos shock. In all cases, Sawyer will be aware of the paradox albeit—and this is important—*not wholly in control of the paradox-causing phenomenon*. He can try to explain what is happening, but the concepts are difficult to articulate.

Two Places At Once. It is possible for Sawyer to appear seemingly simultaneously in two places at once, so that an investigator who leaves him pleading on the deck for a slot upon the helicopter will be surprised to notice Sawyer sitting next to him when the bird is in the air. Alternately, he can appear in two different scenes taking place more or less simultaneously. Noticing the anomaly engenders a 4 pt Stability test (Difficulty 5). If the two versions are brought close together, suddenly there will be only one again, or both will disappear (and Sawyer will show up somewhere else).

> **Sample Explanation.** *"How funny! You're the one who said no, and we're sitting here together! You should be the one who said yes! Our wave-forms are tangled up! Just sit tight; they'll diverge again. I'm sure they will."*

Particle or Wave? Conversely, Sawyer will be absent at times even if there's no way he could have departed—for example, he was locked in the brig. Noticing this engenders a 3 pt Stability test (Difficulty 5).

> **Sample Explanation.** *"I didn't get out of the brig. I'm—I'm—I'm close enough to where I was. Do you understand? The world is spinning; the sun is moving with us around it. We're always moving through space, all of us But I'm the only one who is aware of all my vectors. So my position is fundamentally indeterminate. It can't be known. That's a law of nature."*

Schroedinger's Cat. Sawyer can both be killed and not be killed. For example, if he is shot dead, his lifeless body will fall to the ground while another version of himself appears after a brief delay, continuing the course of action in which he was previously engaged, or carrying out another task as if he'd already completed the one which was interrupted. Witnessing this engenders a 5 pt Stability test at Difficulty 5 (this includes the Stability cost for witnessing but not committing the murder).

> **Sample Explanation.** *"He shot me, yes. He shot me—in that world-line. But we're not just in that world-line; we're in this one too. Here he missed. Over there he never pulled the trigger. There's even a tiny, tiny space-time volume where the gun blew up in his hand, and he's the one who died. All those possibilities are not just possibilities; they're enacted somewhere and somewhen. The waveforms won't collapse."*

Déjà Vu All Over Again. Sawyer can anticipate actions those around him take—except those involving radioactive materials or atomic weapons, regarding which he has a blind spot. This anticipation takes the form of Sawyer "remembering" future events as if they'd already happened, but with the knowledge that they are about to happen again in the not-too-distant future. He will seldom interfere with those anticipated events, but he will *predict* them as a way of proving that he knows what he's talking about.

> **Sample Explanation.** *"How did I know what would happen? It's no parlor trick. We're in a temporal recursion, and I remember this part."*

In practice, use this ability to create mild paranoia among the investigators (a 1 or 2 pt Stability test) for uncannily predicting events. To the extent that Sawyer's predictions involve the investigators, they are *hard drivers* (see *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 73).

Into Something Rich and Strange

More fearsome still, Sawyer can initiate a horrific transformation on anyone who has been exposed to significant amounts of radiation. By grasping or touching someone for a few moments and concentrating—the victim will feel a strange tingling or burning, requiring a 3 pt Stability test (Difficulty 5)—he can force them to make a Health test against a Difficulty equal to their current Dose (see above). In combat, make this *player-facing* (see *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 125): allow an Athletics test vs. Difficulty 4 (+1 if Athletics is 8 or greater) to evade Sawyer's grasp. Fleeing points may be spent if the investigator is in fact running away.

NPCs succeed or fail at the Health test as necessary for dramatic purposes.

Those who succeed pull away; those who fail feel *something in their very cells* responding to Sawyer's touch.

Sample Explanation.

"Quantum theory is incomplete; Einstein said so himself. The missing piece is the mind itself; it is mind that informs matter and energy and gives them shape. There is energy pulsing inside you, that you absorbed from the bomb blast. All I'm doing is using my mind to shape that energy into a new pattern, a pattern that my father showed me."

The transformation will have the following physical effects:

Stage 1. *Over the course of the next twelve hours, the victim's hair falls out. His teeth and nails loosen. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 3 pt loss (minimum 1).*

Stage 2. *Between twelve and twenty-four hours, the victim's teeth and nails fall out. His skin becomes wrinkled and saggy, and he grows physically weak (treat as hurt) as his bones—including his skull—soften. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 5 pt loss (minimum 2).*

Stage 3. *Between twenty-four and forty-eight hours, the victim is in enormous pain (treat as severely wounded) as his body twists itself into impossible shapes and loses its human form. The legs and genitalia retract into the body, which swells enormously and becomes a wide rugose cone, with a heavily muscled ventral foot as its base. Parts of the skin thicken to form a sturdy carapace. The arms become ropy tentacles, and the fingers on each hand fuse to become a heavy pincer. The head loses it shape (with the brain receding into the body cavity) and extends to become four tentacle-like stalks, one with a pair of eyes, two with a single fan-shaped ear each, and one with a toothless maw. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 7 pt loss (minimum 3).*

NPCs who undergo the change will become despondent, angry, and morose by turns. Some will be able to point to Sawyer as the author of their situation, and may become violent. The CO's inclination will be to keep them sedated, although as the Captain's personality is overriden by Theotides, he may order them to be drilled on deck as a special "boarding party."

As the change takes place, an investigator may opt to sacrifice Sanity in order to restore Stability, with each 1 point of Sanity lost providing 2 points of Stability. Witnessing the teratomorphous transformation needs a Stability test at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 4 point loss (minimum 1). An investigator who survives the transformation with Sanity above zero and Stability above -12 is playable, albeit monstrous.

Note to the Keeper: There are a variety of ways of keeping a PC investigator involved in the game even though he is undergoing the transformation. The

A Typical Cone-Being

The transformed cone-being gains +15 Health and +7 Scuffling, in addition to gaining 5 pts of Armor from its thick carapace and a pincer attack that does +5 damage but can only be used at point-blank range. NPC cone-beings will thus typically have on the order of 20 Health and 12 Scuffling. Luckily, its gastropodous movement mode makes it less maneuverable than a human being; the creature has a tough time with stairs and ladders—though it can move quickly when it wishes.

first is to enable him to be treated with First Aid or **Medicine** to ignore the pain, with the change happening in discrete punctuated bursts at appropriate—and Stability-testing!—moments. Another is to make that character the primary recipient of dreams, visions, and messages from the Yithians. Alternately, give PCs more chances to *resist* the change, making a new Health roll at each threshold to delay the onset of the next stage, perhaps aided, enabled, or guaranteed by **Medicine** or **Pharmacy** spends.

Friend of the Flying Polyps

Sawyer knows how to *Contact Flying Polyps,* and they will recognize him as one of their ilk: an instrumentality of Yog-Sothoth itself. If he befriends an investigator—as he is especially likely to try to do to one in whom he has initiated the transformation—he can teach him the warbling call that will summon them from their vault beneath the lagoon of Rongerik, at a cost of 3 Stability and a Stability Test of Difficulty 4.

The Immediate Aftermath

This scene permits the investigators to begin to make inquiries about the strange events that happened during Shot Bravo and its immediate aftermath. Up until now, they have been reacting to what you have thrown at them; now they gain some measure of control over the direction events take. Nonetheless, you must take care to keep up the pressure and sense of urgency; the tools at your disposal include the insidious effects of radiation, unsettling reports from monitoring stations—or the lack thereof—and visions or fugues among the crew.

Begin the scene by determining the effects of radiation exposure on the crew in general and the investigators in particular, and then allow them to pursue what they see as their duties in the current situation; use NPC officers and NCOs to give them orders that serve to position them where they are able to gather information. Make sure that at least one of the radiation victims has begun to undergo the transformation into a cone-being by the end of the scene. End the scene to signify that decontamination operations are complete and the fallout cloud has settled, making it possible to conduct operations off the ship. This is probably anywhere between 24 and 36 hours after the bomb blast.

The Dangers of Radiation Exposure

Have each investigator test Health versus a Difficulty equal to their final Dose. On a success, the character suffers no lasting ill effects other than perhaps some superficial burns. On a failure, the investigator suffers from radiation sickness (treat as *hurt*) and experiences bouts of nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, fatigue, and diarrhea for about 1 hour per point of Dose, and then seems to recover. First Aid at a Difficulty equal to the Dose or a 1 pt **Medicine** or **Pharmacy** spend can halve this recovery time.

Make a roll to determine the exposure level for non-player sailors with whom the investigators dealt during the scene: Sawyer, the crawling man, the gibberish-spouter, and the jumper (if he survives). In addition to these men, about 12 other sailors need to be treated for radiation injuries of varying degrees of severity; give them -1 to this roll. Note that the jumper should probably be automatically assigned third degree exposure.

- **1 or 2. First Degree Exposure.** Relatively minor superficial burns. Difficulty 3 to treat with First Aid, failure has no effect.
- **3 or 4. Second Degree Exposure.** Moderate radiation sickness; the victim is *hurt*. Difficulty 4 to treat with First Aid; failure means that the condition worsens.
- **5 or 6. Third Degree Exposure.** Extensive radiation sickness; the victim is *severely injured*. Difficulty 5 to treat with First Aid; failure means that the victim dies.

The Radiation Victims. Any successful use of First Aid on one or more of the radiation victims provides a dedicated pool point of **Streetwise** that can be used to learn about any gossip or rumors spreading among the crew. Some of the radiation victims may report strange sensations or uncanny visions; **Medicine** or **Library Use** can tell an investigator that such hallucinations are not typically associated with radiation exposure.

- **Uncanny Vision 1 (Floating Core Clue).** First of all, the sun filled up half the sky and it was red like blood. There was a horde of things like giant tarantulas in a big

bowl-shaped amphitheatre, and they all were singing in a weird spider-language. And in the area in the middle of the amphitheatre there was a big empty glass cylinder with some metallic machinery attached and thick cables leading away from it. One of the spiders went up and turned on the machine, and the spider singing got louder, and the glass cylinder seemed to fill up with a silvery emptiness. Then something happened, and the spiders started to run away, and that's when I came to.

- **Uncanny Vision 2 (Floating Core Clue).** I was in a big black castle, but it wasn't really a castle. And there were these knights in the castle, but they really didn't look like knights; I can't really remember what they looked like, exactly. And the knights had been grooming these things that were like huge black dragons, and you could tell that the dragons really loved the knights. But it was like someone flicked a switch and the knights *changed*; they started to run away from the dragons, who started to chase them. And that's all I remember.

- **Uncanny Vision 3 (Floating Core Clue).** There were dinosaurs, big ones, and these things like giant walking slugs with lobster claws were riding them across a swamp toward a big black tower. They were following a road next to these power lines that led back to the tower. And even though it was daytime, there was a bright star over the tower, like a comet.

Sawyer. Sawyer imagined he heard his father calling him, and thought he saw someone—maybe an investigator—on top of the island, near the antenna mast. Note that a severely injured Sawyer can be laying here while another Sawyer is somewhere else aboard the ship.

The Crawling Man. This is Seaman Schultz; an intense, bookish young man from the state of Oregon. "It was like Kafka, man! I was a *cockroach*—no, I was a *hive* of them; I was *all of them,* the way you're your head and your hands and your heart. And I was with a *bunch of other hives*, or whatever you call them, and we were all trying to build something like a sculpture, and all the while making this drawn-out droning noise like, 'saaa-maaa . . . saaa-maaa . . . saaa-maaa.' That's all I know."

The Gibberish-Spouter. This is Seaman Clark, a big but laid-back country boy from a small town in Georgia. "Well," he says, "I was in a fancy palace in some foreign country. Everyone there was as black as the ace of spades, and there was a huge fat man who looked like a judge sitting on a throne watching me, and his guards had mean scars on their faces and giant cleavers on their belts. I guess I was on trial or something because they had these wooden handcuffs on me, and I looked at the back of my hands and *I was coal black too.* And then one of 'em came up and started shouting at me and waving something in my face, but I couldn't understand what all he was saying."

The Jumper. This is Seaman McWhirter from Long Beach, California. If his body is even recovered, he will probably be too weak to speak, possibly comatose, for hours after the initial event. Then he will begin to babble without regaining consciousness, and eventually lapse into a coma.

- **Floating Core Clue.** "I'm telling you . . . I'm not one of them. I'm a man! I'm human! I wasn't one of them! I didn't try to bind you! You're a god, I know you're a god! I wouldn't do that! Men don't do that! Please! Don't! Please! Lower your veil! Do not show me the Voorish Sign! Ah! Your silver spheres! Your silver spheres! They're so *beautiful!*"

Someone who attends closely to his babbling for several hours gains +1 **Cthulhu Mythos** as they hear him plead with cosmic beings whose god-like indifference to humanity is the only thing that saves us from their ineffable malignity and who seem to be built into the very fabric of the universe. Such a one may also piece together the **Voorish Sign** (see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 120), which renders the invisible visible to the caster. It requires a Stability test of Difficulty 5 as well as the expenditure of 1 point of Stability and 1 pt of Sense Trouble or **Evidence Collection.**

Soon...

After three hours, the *Bairoko* is about 60 miles due south of its previous position. Note the change on the Area of Operations map. The effect of the contamination from the fallout is to reduce the Operational Readiness of the ship by 3; also note this change.

Then allow the investigators to take action as they desire or feel necessary; push the Drives of those who are uncertain as to what they should do, or have an NPC officer assign them to some duty.

Decontamination Operations

The *Bairoko* is equipped for decontamination operations, with personnel showers and detergent-spraying hoses occupying a portion of the hangar deck. Some investigators may volunteer or be assigned to decon duty. For every six hours of such duty they perform, each can make a skill roll at Difficulty 4 which, if successful, contributes +1 to an Operational Readiness roll by the highest ranking investigator at Difficulty 5 to restore one point of Operational Readiness.

Appropriate skills include Athletics (energetically scrubbing decks and other exposed surfaces), Electrical

Repair (firing up and maintaining generators and similar equipment), First Aid (treating radiation casualties), Mechanical Repair (setting up and operating decon equipment like hoses, showers, and sprayers), Sense Trouble (using detection equipment to go over places others may have missed). Allow appropriate spends to reduce the Difficulty of one type of skill roll by one (e.g., a 1 pt **Medicine** spend may reduce all First Aid rolls to Difficulty 3).

Bureaucracy. Readiness has been affected by the recent incident. Many crewman are complaining of headaches, dizziness, and blurred vision. There are also numerous incidents of people failing to report for duty or showing up late and not remembering where they had been or why they were late.

Streetwise. Don't let anybody know you heard this from me, but one of the cooks in the mess section is from Kentucky. He rigged up a still and is selling moonshine after hours. He's making money hand over fist, now—so many guys went crazy during Shot Bizarro, they need a stiff belt to get them through (also **Cop Talk**). **Streetwise, 1 pt spend.** The investigator obtains a bottle of high-proof potato hooch. He can choose to go easy on it, gaining +1 on Stability tests but -1 on all other General ability tests, or go on a bender, automatically succeeding on Stability tests but taking -2 on all other General ability tests and losing the ability to make investigative spends until he sleeps it off. The former effect lasts 24 hours. The former only lasts 12, but then the character must sleep for at least 6 hours and then make a Health roll at Difficulty 4 or be hung over, suffering all the effects of being on a bender and automatically *failing* Stability tests for 12 hours. Having made the connection via **Streetwise,** later purchases can use **Bargaining** or **Credit Rating.**

Scuttlebutt Aboard the *Bairoko*

You can use these rumors as incidents involving the investigators or as things they find out about later.

- **Rumor 1.** Right after the detonation, an engineer's mate went crazy and started busting stuff up, shouting something about being "the king of frozen Lomar." He's in the brig now. **Follow-Up:** Seaman Lorenzo is still in the brig, and he still thinks he's Kirriyari, High King of frozen Lomar, where once he did battle 'gainst monstrous white-furred half-men and the degenerate serpent-creatures whose mighty ancestors had long ago ruled vanished Valusia. He can tell how he was imprisoned in a demon's body in a dark tower with other men from distant ages and times—one of whom, a magician from the land of Stralia at the time of the fall of the West and rise of the Cruel Empire of Tsan Chan, taught him English. In the tower he was made to record as much as he could tell about Lomar and its people, and he is thankful for his freedom from that durance vile. "Now release me from this cage and I will lead you into glorious battle 'gainst your foemen!" he promises. "We will crush their skulls and mock the lamentations of their women!"

- **Rumor 2.** A rash of pilferage from machine shops and maintenance areas struck right after the bomb blast. **Follow-Up:** The missing items vanished from widely separated areas of the ship over the course of several hours. The items missing include copper wiring, batteries, replacement parts for radar equipment, and electrician's tools. A canvassing of the crew (spend **Interrogation**) might produce a witness who will remember having seen Machinists' Mate Lemoine acting funny—"like he was sleepwalking, I dunno"—near a machine parts storage locker in the Engine Room from which some of the missing items disappeared. Searching Lemoine's locker uncovers a pair of needlenose pliers with identification marks from the missing tool kit. His sectionmates in the "A-gang" (auxiliary equipment mechanics) aver that he was gone for several hours right after the blast, when they were up helping with decon ops. Lemoine insists that he was framed, although he doesn't remember what he was doing during that time. Hidden among some junk parts in the A-gang machine shop is the thing Lemoine put together, which looks like a cargo-cult raygun. Here's the thing: it will actually work. Treat as a cut-rate lightning gun with 16 charges (see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules p. 135) that must be allowed to geometrically "build up" its charge round by round (so it can be fired each round for +1 damage 16 times, every other round for +2 eight times, every third round for +4 four times, every fourth round for +8 twice, and after five rounds of build-up for +16 damage once). Anyone with Electrical Repair can figure out how to fire it using Firearms, but it is bulky and awkward to carry. If there is not enough charge left, the whole thing shorts out noisily and must be repaired and recharged.

- **Rumor 3.** The CO is rattled. He's losing his grip and talking crazy in the command center. **Follow-Up:** Captain Hogle has started to give orders in *koine* Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Hellenistic world, and then correct himself. As the adventure goes on, he will increasingly take on the personality of Theotides, an ambitious general

of the Greco-Bactrian domain founded by Alexander the Great (in what is now Afghanistan) while retaining less and less of Hogle's basic knowledge. Theotides is cruel, manipulative, and cunning, liable to order extravagant punishments like flogging; the effect of this personality change will be to render Hogle relatively immune to persuasion via **Bureaucracy** and **Law** and more susceptible to **Credit Rating** ("This is how it's done here, sir") and **Assess Honesty** ("I know you're not who you say you are!").

Monitoring the Signals

The command and communication facilities of the CIC, Flight Ops, and Bridge are taking in information; the *Bairoko* has been ordered to gather information to enable the Atomic Energy Commission scientists to figure out what happened; all planned nuclear bomb testing has been suspended until further notice. Some of the information needed can be obtained by investigators going out and getting it.

To the extent possible, give the investigators input into the process of deciding what the ship and its crew will do next. Have their officers solicit their input or ask their advice in directed scenes intended to underscore the bafflement of the leadership in the face of all this cosmic weirdness.

Floating Core Clue. Sonar readings show that the blast produced unanticipated seismic activity in this area.

- **Geology.** A tsunami warning should be issued for the Castle AO based on the strength of the seismic activity.

Floating Core Clue. Weather balloon readings show that the winds in the area have picked up strength unexpectedly and changed direction, blowing strongly to the east.

- **Physics.** Analyzing the meteorological data reveals that the fallout cloud has swept over Ailinginae, Rongelap, and Rongerik in addition to Bikini Atoll.

- **Biology (leverage: meteorological analysis).** Until the fallout settles, it is highly dangerous to move around in the affected areas. It will be okay to conduct limited operations beginning with Bikini at H+12, Ailinginae and Rongelap at H+30, and Rongerik at H+36. Personnel on those islands should be evacuated as soon as operating conditions permit; in the meantime, they should stay indoors and try to avoid contact with contaminated material (also **Medicine**).

Floating Core Clue. There is a lot of noise in the radar return. Zig-zagging ghost contacts pop up and disappear with disturbing regularity.

- **Electrical Repair.** There is no detectable problem with the radar system. Taking it apart and reassembling it, swapping out potentially defective parts—nothing works. The ghost contacts continue.

- **Evidence Collection.** The ghost contacts seem to be centered on Rongerik.

Floating Core Clue. The monitoring station on Rongerik is requesting evacuation at the earliest possible time. They are holding out in their shielded room, but space is tight and supplies are running low.

Floating Core Clue. The control bunker on Bikini has been incommunicado since the blast.

- **Bureaucracy.** Standard operating procedure calls for personnel in the bunker to remain in a specially shielded chamber until the all clear is given.

Floating Core Clue. The Atomic Energy Commission scientists now on Kwajalein are anxious to get out to Bikini and start taking measurements, but General Clarkson has concerns about the dangers that may be present.

Anomalous Sightings

In this scene, the investigators have more-or-less free rein to investigate what's been taking place in the Castle Area of Operations while they have been waiting it out aboard the Bairoko. *Hitherto, the menace has been creepy rather than deadly; here that changes.*

Begin the scene at any point in time after the completion of decontamination operations. If the investigators have not initiated planning for a recon or biological sampling mission themselves, have such orders come down the chain of command. Allow investigators to decide if they will stay on the *Bairoko* or go on such a mission, depending on their inclinations and sense of narrative plausibility. Investigators who desire to go but cannot devise a plausible excuse may spend Investigative abilities (e.g., **Bureaucracy**) to warrant their inclusion.

This write-up assumes that investigators will wait until it is more or less "safe" to visit the affected area before leaving the ship; if they insist on getting off the ship before it is safe, increase their individual Dose by 1 point per hour for the first 12 hours following the blast, 1 point per 6 hours for the second 12 hours after, and 1 point per 12 hours

for the third 12 hours after. Have them make a new Health roll as described above at the end of each twelve-hour period. After 36 hours, only long-term exposure and ingestion risks remain; i.e., don't live there and don't eat anything grown there.

In a 4-hour convention slot, you will not have time to touch upon all of these incidents. End the scene when the investigators who have left return to the ship from the mission to Rongerik.

In the Sky

In transit to one or another destination, have the pilot make a Sense Trouble roll at Difficulty 5. If he succeeds, he may make a Piloting roll at Difficulty 5 to avoid colliding with a half-seen shape that seems to roil the air, a vague shimmering greyness within which dark blotches evanesce. If he fails either roll, the craft strikes the flying polyp with a loud crash; make a Piloting roll at Difficulty 4 to ditch safely in the water with only minor bruises. Failing this second Piloting roll means that everyone aboard the craft takes 1d6-3 Health damage on impact (roll individually).

If the aircraft stays in the air, the pilot may spot the creature streaking northeastward (or, generally in the direction of Rongerik). If the pilot gives chase, do this: Each round, the pilot must first Sense Trouble (Difficulty 4). If he fails, he must deal with the buffeting cross-winds summoned by the fleeing polyp by rolling his Piloting versus a Difficulty of 5 to avoid taking 1d6-1 structural damage from the shaking and twisting; the aircraft can take 10 such damage points. After these preliminaries, the pilot must then make his Piloting check versus a Difficulty of 4 to stay on the polyp's tail; on a failure, the polyp gets away—however, it will be making a beeline for Rongerik, so that's something. Allow other investigators to help, e.g., by making a Sense Trouble roll at Difficulty 4 to give the Pilot +1 on a single roll, by using Mechanical Repair or Electrical Repair similarly to field-repair some of the damage (restoring 1-3 points, say), and so forth. Call for Stability tests when the flying polyp is spotted (2 pts, Difficulty 5), when the aircraft first takes damage (3 pts, Difficulty 4), and when it hits the water (3 pts, Difficulty 4).

If the pilot makes three successful checks to stay on the polyp's tail, the pilot reaches Rongerik atoll in time to see it descend over the lagoon.

If the aircraft ends up in the water, the crew is probably "rescued" by the *Lucky Dragon,* a Japanese fishing boat that has inadvertantly strayed into the area.

The Bunker at Bikini

The devastation on the atoll is considerable. The whole thing is covered with gray ash, and much of the vegetation has been burned away. **Biology** observations will confirm the general picture of great ecological

destruction. The control site has been devastated. Not much remains standing.

The control bunker is in an underground chamber built with reinforced concrete and shielded with lead, its entrance located on the far side of the main island away from the site of the detonation (at the end of long jetty, now in ruins). Propped up against the door of the bunker is a man dying of radiation poisoning, incontinent, too weak to move, and bleeding from his nose, ears, and eyes. It is *Sawyer*! At least, a version of Sawyer from an alternate world-line where his transfer to the *Bairoko* wasn't approved and he remained on Bikini. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 for 4 points for the paradoxical and grisly nature of this find.

"They turned into monsters," he gasps. "Fallout got into the ventilation system, and they got sick. I tried to help them, but they went mad. Don't go in there." He dies messily and painfully without saying much more, although a **Reassurance** spend may coax him to provide the access code for the bunker door.

The bunker is sealed. It requires **Lockpicking** or Explosives (Difficulty 4) to get open it up, absent the access code. Inside the bunker, a narrow corridor with smashed decon gear leads to a control room with now inoperative monitoring equipment. **Evidence Collection** allows an investigator to notice trails of dried residue criss-crossing the room and leading to the living areas beyond; **Biology** will suggest the mucus-producing glands of gastropods, which lay trails to ease their passage across rough surfaces. In the center of the room is the dismembered corpse of *another* Sawyer, ripped messily apart as if literally torn limb from limb. Test Stability (Difficulty 5) for 4 points.

Further in, inside the wreckage of the mess hall/kitchen area, the investigators are attacked by about four cone-beings who have been hiding behind overturned tables, stovetops, and so forth; some are still wearing tattered and now blood-stained rags that were once labcoats. Sense Trouble at Difficulty 4 to avoid the ambush. Everyone should test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 3 point loss (minimum 1). Anyone who fails the roll may be attacked; roll Athletics at Difficulty 4 to dodge the pincers that seek to grab them as the creatures surge forward; failure means they've been grabbed and are about to be pulled apart by the inhuman strength of the creatures. Some characters may be attacked by more than one cone-being; if Sawyer is with the investigators—and maybe he ought to be—the cone-beings will concentrate on him. Characters may now act; those who Sensed Trouble are at close range while those who did not are at point-blank. Those who avoided the pincers may act freely; those who have been grabbed may only try to escape (test Athletics at Difficulty 5). After the first round, those who have been grabbed are rended by the pincers holding them; make a Health roll at Difficulty 3, +2 Difficulty for each additional cone-being who assists in the rending; someone who is already caught may be automatically grabbed by another cone-being.

The cone-beings will not pursue past the control room—at least, for now. Note that these are the scientists who once manned the bunker, transformed by Sawyer's manipulation of the radioactive contamination of their bodies into monstrous form and now crazed with despair and horror. If a corpse is obtained, an autopsy will reveal the distortions of human anatomy within the alien carapace.

Evacuating Rongerik

Rongerik is an uninhabited atoll is twenty-five miles east of Rongelap. It is the site of a small, temporary U.S. station. It is currently occupied by about two dozen scientists from the Atomic Energy Commission (A.E.C.), holed up in a sealed room in their monitoring station since the fallout warning.

Biology. The fish in the lagoon seem to have withstood the increased radiation levels very well; we're not seeing the same sort of die-off here that we've seen at Bikini and Eniwetok in previous tests.

- **Biology, 1 pt spend.** Even without the radiation, these fish aren't edible; their flesh is slightly toxic.

Geology. Naval charts show that the floor of the lagoon is concave and steeply sloped rather than convex and shallow (also **Library Use**).

History. The islanders who left Bikini Atoll before Operation Crossroads in 1946 first came here to Rongerik before settling elsewhere.

Oral History. The scientists have heard strange whistling noises coming from outside; they are eager to get off the island.

In the center of the lagoon, a black cone of what seems to be cooling lava has emerged from the water. There seems to be an opening in its center.

An investigator who wants to explore the islet in the middle of the lagoon certainly may; abandoned outrigger canoes may be employed to get to the warm outcropping. The hole seems to go very far underground. Have the character make a Stability test at Difficulty 4 versus a 2 pt loss as he descends into the inky blackness. To represent the technical challenge of the exploration, require a series of rolls

involving Preparedness, Mechanical Repair, and Athletics where the first roll at Difficulty 4 increases or decreases by one the Difficulty of the next roll, which in turn affects the final roll, whose result indicates whether or not the investigator takes 1d6 damage from still-cooling lava and smoky fumes. An **Outdoorsman** spend may negate a single failure. Eventually, the investigator arrives in what seems to be a wide cavern pocked with regular holes. Make a 2 pt Stability test at Difficulty 4 as a weird whistling sound begins. A 1 pt **Evidence Collection** spend allows the character to notice a piece of fibrous matting on the ground. The investigator will begin to be harassed by winds, and should be induced to flee.

In daylight, the fibrous matting proves to have faded text on it—in an investigator's own handwriting! It says,

> *Kingston-Brown calls the [illegible] the Son of Yog-Sothoth, and hopes that the last Yithian can collapse the waveform by a sufficiently powerful invocation of the Saaamaaa ritual. Otherwise, we [illegible] doomed.*

Encourage players to roll Stability tests if they are at all freaked out.

Lucky Dragon Number Five

This is a Japanese fishing boat with a load of tuna and a crew of 12, many of whom show signs of radiation poisoning. They are anxious to get back to Japan, because one of them is very sick, but they will seek medical help for themselves if they make contact with the *Bairoko* or its crew. In real life, the *Lucky Dragon* made it back to Japan before anyone in the Operation Castle AO even knew they'd been there. Because of their irradiation, they make ideal subjects for transformation into cone-beings.

Rongelap and Ailinginae

These two island atolls have also been affected by fallout. They are inhabited by about 150 Marshallese men, women, and children, and at some point the United States military is going to remember that they need to be moved somewhere safe. This evacuation can take place off-camera (i.e., without investigator participation), and serve mainly as a source of people to be transformed into cone-beings by the Son of Yog-Sothoth.

The Problem With Castle Bravo

Investigators who care about why the bomb was so powerful should be able to gather readings from instrumentation on Bikini and Rongerik as well as transmissions from Eniwetok and Kwajalein and figure it out. The explanation should be able to be parlayed into credibility with the higher-ups of Operation Castle, including General Clarkson.

Floating Bonus Clue. Instruments reveal that the yield of Shot Bravo was 15 megatons, about three times the expected yield. The fireball was about 4 miles in diameter, and the initial mushroom cloud rose 10 miles into the air. The *Bairoko* was actually under the edge of the dissipating mushroom cloud when the fallout hit.

- **Physics.** The yield calculations for the "Shrimp" device used in Castle Bravo assume that the lithium-7 isotope in the lithium deuteride used as fusion fuel was inert; however, if it too were fusible, then the yield numbers would look about like the numbers we actually saw. The scientists who built the thing probably should have known better.

Shadows...

Use this information to give investigators the resources they need to "solve" the mystery; more precisely, to give them the opportunity to gain resources that will enable them to take effective action against the Son of Yog-Sothoth.

We, In Some Strange Powers Employ . . .

At a point after the investigators have realized that there is something very, very strange about Sawyer, have an investigator black out for a moment—maybe make him lose a round of action—and then return to his senses. The point of this blackout is to narratively justify the Yithians knowing what the characters do.

Later, another fugue will occur. This takes the form of a series of *hard drivers* for an investigator (not necessarily the same one who blacked out). If the lightning gun once hidden in the "A Gang" workshop in the Engine Room spaces has not been discovered (see ***Scuttlebutt Aboard the* Bairoko,** above), the urge is to go down there and search. If it has been moved, the urge is to obtain it from its new location. If the lightning gun is not accessible, the urge is to obtain a weapon of some kind.

In any case, once the investigator has a weapon, a new urge strikes, acting as a separate hard driver. It is to find Sawyer and attack him with the weapon as hard as possible while chanting the words, "saaa-maaa lo no taaa nay" over and over again.

This chant is a version of the seventh line of the Saaamaaa ritual (see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 124), but use these rules for casting it. First, the investigator loses 1 Sanity as he becomes tentatively cognizant of a greater non-Euclidean totality outside the visible world around him. Next, use the difference between the energy of the attack—i.e.,

the damage roll—and Sawyer's Inertia of 24 to determine the target numbers for a contest to "collapse the temporal singularity" represented by Sawyer. The investigator makes his ritual roll first, each of which costs 1 Stability. Keep rolling until someone fails. Note that it is possible for an attack to "kill" Sawyer (at least temporarily) but fail to collapse the singularity.

Damage Minus Inertia	Ritual Roll	Inertia Roll
+7 or more	auto succeed	auto fail
+4 to +6	2+	6+
+2 or +3	3+	5+
-1 to +1	4+	4+
-3 or -2	5+	3+
-6 to -4	6+	2+
-7 or less	auto fail	auto succeed

Note that if the ritual succeeds, even if Sawyer is not killed he is rendered powerless—that is, only human. But the numbers are deliberately crocked so that this attempt to collapse the singularity will probably fail. To drive home the point, the next time Sawyer sees the investigator, he is scornful. "Tell your spider-ghost masters it wasn't enough," he will say. "Not enough power."

Most players will get the point: they have the Saaamaaa ritual—perhaps you will require a spend to allow the investigator to recall it to mind correctly—so now all they need is a sufficiently powerful energy source to successfully collapse the singularity. The words "atom bomb" need not ever escape your lips.

If the singularity collapses, Sawyer is vulnerable. If he is killed, the only things that the investigators then have to deal with are the transformed cone-beings and the flying polyps.

...Move In A Rigorous Line

The following may be a memory recovered via Reassurance or Psychoanalysis following an investigator's blackout, or simply be inserted at the appropriate time.

One of the investigators who has been affected by the strange fugue finds himself in a cylindrical pit of black stone, beneath a vaulted ceiling of the same material. Some sort of machinery has been suspended over the pit, all fluted glass and silver metal, with dark cables snaking up from it. On the floor of the pit is a scroll of tough fibrous material.

The investigator realizes that he is in a non-human body shaped like a rugose cone; he has two pincer arms and his eyes are mounted on a tentacle emerging from the cone's apex along with three other tentacles bearing ears and a mouth. Test Stability (Difficulty 5) to avoid a 3 pt loss. He cannot speak; his elongated throat enables him to produce only a sort of gurgling noise.

An oculiferous tentacle peeks over the edge of the pit, and it says something; a modulated trilling that the investigator can't understand. If the investigator hasn't read the scroll yet, the creature will gesticulate urgently toward it.

The scroll is written in English.

> *My name is Nevil Kingston-Brown. I was born in Sydney, Australia, in the year 2517 AD, ten years before the Tsan Chan completed their assimilation of Europe. By the time I graduated from college, North America had been fully integrated into the Tsan Chan system. By then we knew enough to call it "the Cruel Empire." Only Australia remained, the last bastion of Western civilization, a fiercely burning ember of a 3000-year-old heritage. I was in grad school, studying physics. My work on higher-order N-dimensional folding secured me a post-doc position at the University of Melbourne. I was on my way to campus when the bombs started to fall; apparently the Tsan Chan were unwilling to continue to deal with Australian intransigence. Fortunately for me, it was at that moment when a Yithian exchanged its consciousness for mine, drawing me 65 million years into my own past into an alien body. The Yithian was not so lucky, however. I can only imagine the creature's chagrin as the Cruel Empire's anti-matter bomb vaporized my body in the 26th century—its all-too-brief cross-temporal host.*
>
> *With return to my own time impossible, I was granted great privileges among the Yithians, who had been exiled from their home in the far future by a being they call Yog-Sothoth. I learned much of their history and their science.*
>
> *Their host-forms in this era were a pitiful species that had been enslaved by creatures whom the Yithians describe as "flying polyps." The Yithians were able to subdue the flying polyps, and set about trying to escape from their nightmare exile. They mastered the art of projecting their minds across time and space, and ranged the entire history of the Solar System. Their scouts thought they had found an ideal new home in the sentient cockroach hive-minds who came to dominate the earth 5 million years after my era.*

But transferring the minds of every Yithian across 70 million years of time required a great deal of energy. The Yithians had to wait until a giant asteroid—probably the one associated with the K-T boundary event—struck the earth. Channeling the force of the impact with the Saaamaaa ritual, they were able to leap across the ages, finally free of their centuries-long exile—or so they thought.

I was left behind, free to read the accumulated wisdom brought back by the Yithian time-scouts, my only companion a Ganymedan polymath named Morqquon from 2.5 billion years ago who had been trapped in similar circumstances as mine. One day, however, Morqquon's mind was gone; a true Yithian had returned!

The inexplicable had happened: the migration was scattered across time and space. We rigged up temporal scouting gear and sent the last Yithian across time and space to understand what had gone wrong. Soon, our research identified mid-20th century atomic bomb testing as the site of a temporal singularity that is interfering with the Yithian's cross-temporal migration.

My Yithian companion believes that Yog-Sothoth has managed to localize within a persistent temporal loop. He hopes to identify the localization and neutralize it by means of a variation on the Saaamaaa ritual and a crude power source he has covertly constructed. If he fails, then not only is the Yithian migration doomed, but the very fabric of the universe will begin to unravel, permitting those who dwell Outside to make ours their home.

The creature will gesture at the scroll and then at itself, trying to make clear that it is Nevil Kingston-Brown. If the investigator indicates his peaceful intentions, Kingston-Brown will operate machinery that unfolds a spiral ramp into the pit. Emerging, the investigator sees a long gallery whose walls are covered with thousands of tiny pigeon-holes, each containing a scroll much like the first.

It is a portion of the Supreme Work of the Great Race of Yith. The investigator can spend **Library Use** to gain dedicated pool points of any Academic skill, including **Cthulhu Mythos**, on a one-for-one basis, reading accounts in any language known to him by people brought to the Yithian library over the ages.

- **Cthulhu Mythos, 1 pt spend (leverage: Yog-Sothoth).** The investigator learns a ritual to call Yog-Sothoth, which requires the caster to stand in a high tower or other elevated place and achieve three "ritual successes" by any of the following means (a) making a Stability test at Difficulty 7, (b) spending 2 points of Occult or Theology, or (c) spending 1 point of Cthulhu Mythos. So, e.g., spending 3 points of Cthulhu Mythos is sufficient to call Yog-Sothoth. Note that spending Cthulhu Mythos reduces the caster's Sanity. Once the Outer God arrives, the caster must designate a human sacrifice. This designation need not be more than a gesture of invitation, and the god must accept the sacrifice so designated. Yog-Sothoth appears as a beautiful congeries of translucent silver spheres within which images of different times and places shimmer.

...Out of Time

In this scene, the time has come for desperate action against the instrumentalities of Yog-Sothoth—his Son, the flying polyps, and the cone-beings. The investigators may or may not know what to do, but it is no matter. They are out of time. This is the climax of the adventure, and you must spring it on them whether they are ready or not.

Give the investigators a chance to discuss their understanding and intentions. Do they think they know what's going on? Do they have a plan to deal with it? If so, establish the tasks that are required for the plan to succeed, using the *Bairoko* schematic to specify where each investigator needs to be, when he needs to be there, and what he needs to do. If not, let them position themselves on the ship where they want to be for their next set of actions, and then kick things into action.

Example. *The investigators' plan is to scuttle the ship so that Sawyer and the cone-beings drown. Chief Walton must go down to the Magazine and rig charges there to blow. He tells everyone else to get off the ship. There is a helicopter on the Flight Deck. Walton needs to spend three rounds prepping the charges, and then make an Explosives roll at Difficulty 4 to determine if the time delay works right. When the charges blow, a second Explosives roll indicates the amount by which the Operational Readiness of the ship is reduced as well as the damage suffered by anyone still on the ship. The other investigators must make Mechanical Repair rolls to do pre-flight checks on the helicopter, the Difficulty depending on how many rounds they take to do them: one round, one roll at Difficulty 6; two rounds, two rolls at Difficulty 4; three rounds, three rolls at Difficulty 2. You put everyone on the Hangar Deck and begin the scene.*

It is your job now to provide them with some heavy-duty adversity, with a dramatic and action-packed finish as a reward for the players' willingness to wade in the Mythos weirdness. In general, you'll describe the menacing activities of the Mythos creatures and the reactions of the *Bairoko* crew, using this description to justify subtracting some amount from the *Bairoko's* Operational Readiness each "round" (which may well represent several minutes or even hours of activity) to represent this antagonism. The investigators can stave off or reduce this loss with Investigative ability spends, General ability rolls, or other actions.

> **Example.** *You envision the cone-beings breaking out of their confinement in sick bay, overpowering the guards, and making their way to the magazine to arm themselves. You subtract one from the ship's Operational Readiness, and tell Chief Walton that he hears men screaming, shots being fired, and inhuman ululations coming from outside the magazine. Over the ship's loudspeaker, the XO sounds General Quarters and orders all hands to repel boarders.*

Attack of the Flying Polyps

Radar contacts provide the first warning of their approach; they have either been called by the Son of Yog-Sothoth or somehow detected the presence of the cone-beings aboard the *Bairoko*. As they come near, a whistling wail grows in intensity, and the wind picks up strongly. Seeing the air roil and swirl as the flying polyps orbit the ship, flickering in and out of visibility, is worth a 2 pt Stability test at Difficulty 5.

> **The Son of Yog-Sothoth Speaks.** *"I understand now. My real father was a sailor, too. He sails the spheres between what is real and what could be real and what has never been. He's calling to me, somehow. Those things in the sky—they're as unreal as I am. They're my father's servants. No, not servants, that's wrong; they're his garment, his flesh. Just as I am."*

The flying polyps will try to protect Sawyer. As long as he is alive, they will be content to hover menacingly in the sky and occasionally stoop downward to carry off a sailor who has been shooting at them. They will blast the Flight Deck with winds—note that the cone-beings, being bottom-heavy, will be relatively immune to these effects—that may sweep unprepared sailors overboard.

March of the Cone-Creatures

Unless the cone-beings are killed outright by the investigators—for no NPC officer will order such a thing unless they are clearly an outright danger to the ship—they will eventually decide to *do something*: probably flee the ship and find an island where they won't be disturbed,

or take over the ship and claim it for their own, or scuttle the ship with all hands in gesture of nihilistic defiance.

An investigator who has succumbed to the transformation but thus far held it together has one further hurdle to overcome the first time a flying polyp draws near. It is a hard driver for all transformed cone-beings to use their pincers to "groom" the flying polyps, picking at their semi-material substance and eliminating the grey haze that discolors it. Watching this weird behavior requires a 3 pt. Stability test at Difficulty 4.

Sawyer will try to convince them to join him on Rongerik where they may build a city of their own, using the power of the flying polyps to conquer time and space.

> **The Son of Yog-Sothoth Speaks.** *"Don't you see? You are all my brothers! Yog-Sothoth is our father now! Come with me to the place he has prepared for us, where all of time and space will be ours!"*

Just Then,

An Atomic Bomb Went Off

The investigators may be able to gain access to an atomic bomb; use the rules for ***Going Up The Chain***, above, noting that General Clarkson (O-8) is the approving authority for releasing the weapons. Securing the nuke "unofficially" should require slightly fewer Investigative spends as using the chain of command—say 4 to 6, depending on the justification—but will get the characters involved in big, big trouble if they survive.

To determine how much damage the bomb blast does, use the following table. Roll the indicated number of dice to determine the blast damage (which affects the Operational Readiness of the ship as well as the Health of individual characters, although Preparedness rolls as well as **Outdoorsman** and other spends can reduce this amount). The *number* of

Distance from Blast	Dice Damage	Stability Test
At ground zero	16	8 pts, Difficulty 5
within 5 miles	8	6 pts, Difficulty 4
within 10 miles	4	4 pts, Difficulty 4
within 20 miles	2	3 pts, Difficulty 3
within 40 miles	1	2 pts, Difficulty 3

dice indicates the additional radiation Dose suffered by those in the affected area.

Witnessing an atomic bomb blast requires a Stability test as indicated. You may wish the Saaamaaa ritual to protect those nearby from the worst effects of detonation.

The End

If the players succeed in their plan, allow them players to describe the fates of their characters, should they live, and to imagine the impact of the events they witnessed on subsequent history. To the extent the players desire, offer explanations for the strange events they witnessed whose causes they were unable to infer. If they fail, you may end the adventure with the characters standing on the deck of the *Bairoko* with the Shot Bravo detonation unfolding before them once more, and Sawyer going up to a character, saying, "*This time*, don't [do whatever the character did of which Sawyer disapproves] and I won't [cause or allow to come to pass the character's death, injury, or discomfiture]."

Background Information

Military Characters

All military characters have rank (note: technically, in the Navy, enlisted personnel are said to have a "rate" and "rating" rather than a rank). A character's rank is signified by either the letter O (for "officer") or E (for "enlisted") and a number indicating relative seniority. e.g., an O-3 in the Navy is a Lieutenant, while an E-6 is a Petty Officer First Class.

Military Rank

Officers technically outrank enlisted men, but senior enlisted men (non-commissioned officers, called "NCOs" or "non-coms") are responsible for supervising the training and day-to-day activities of their unit while officers focus on planning and executing the missions those units have been assigned.

In the Navy, the commissioned officer ranks below Admiral are Ensign (O-1), Lieutenant Junior Grade (O-2), Lieutenant (O-3), Lieutenant Commander (O-4), Commander (O-5), and Captain (O-6). In the Marines, the officer ranks below General are Second Lieutenant (O-1), First Lieutenant (O-2), Captain (O-3), Major (O-4), Lieutenant Colonel (O-5), and Colonel (O-6). Commissioned officers are called "sir" by those they outrank.

In the Navy, junior enlisted ranks (E-1 through E-3) are seamen, becoming petty officers third through first class (E-4 to E-6) and then chief petty officers (E-7), senior chief petty officers (E-8), and master chief petty officers (E-9).

In the Marines, enlisted recruits are privates (E-1), becoming privates first class (E-2) with a little bit of experience. An E-3 is a lance corporal; the next step is corporal (E-4) and then sergeant (E-5). Higher ranks are staff sergeant (E-6), gunnery sergeant (E-7), master sergeant (E-8) and master gunnery sergeant (E-9).

Naval Organization

The crew of the *Bairoko* is organized into six departments of different sizes, each headed by an O-3 (Lieutenant) or O-4 (Lieutenant Commander) assisted by an E-8 (Senior Chief). The departments are Operations and Navigation (ON: piloting the ship; radar, sonar, and weather prediction; communications; air operations control; anything mission-related), Administration and Supply (AS: all logistical functions; includes Medical, Dental, and Legal divisions), Deck (D: anything related to keeping things shipshape), Air (A: keeping aircraft flight-ready), and Engineering (E: keeping the engines running and screws turning). By and large, however, they will serve as simple functionaries, and need only be described by a rank, position, and last name, if that. Use the following templates as a guide to the talents and capabilities of NPCs.

A Typical Naval Officer. Astronomy 1, Athletics 4-6, Bureaucracy (equal to rank minus 1), Credit Rating (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 2), Firearms 4, Health 4-6, Intimidation (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 0), Outdoorsman 1, Reassurance (equal to rank, maximum 6), Sanity 3, Scuffling 4-6, Stability 4-6.

A Typical Pilot. Athletics 4-6, Bureaucracy (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 0), Conceal 2, Credit Rating (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 2), Firearms 4, Intimidation (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 0), Outdoorsman 1, Piloting (equal to rank plus 1, maximum 6), Reassurance (equal to rank), Sanity 3, Scuffling 4-6, Stability 4-6.

A Typical Marine. Athletics 6-8, Conceal 2, Driving 2, Firearms 6, Health 6, Intimidation 2, Outdoorsman 2, Sanity 3, Scuffling 6-8, Stability 4-6, Stealth 2, Weapons 4. Officers add Bureaucracy and Credit Rating as per Naval Officer, above.

A Typical Sailor. Athletics 4-6, some combination equal to rank of Electrical Repair, Explosives, Firearms, Mechanical Repair, and Piloting (i.e., watercraft), Health 4-6, Sanity 3, Scuffling 4-6, Stability 4-6.